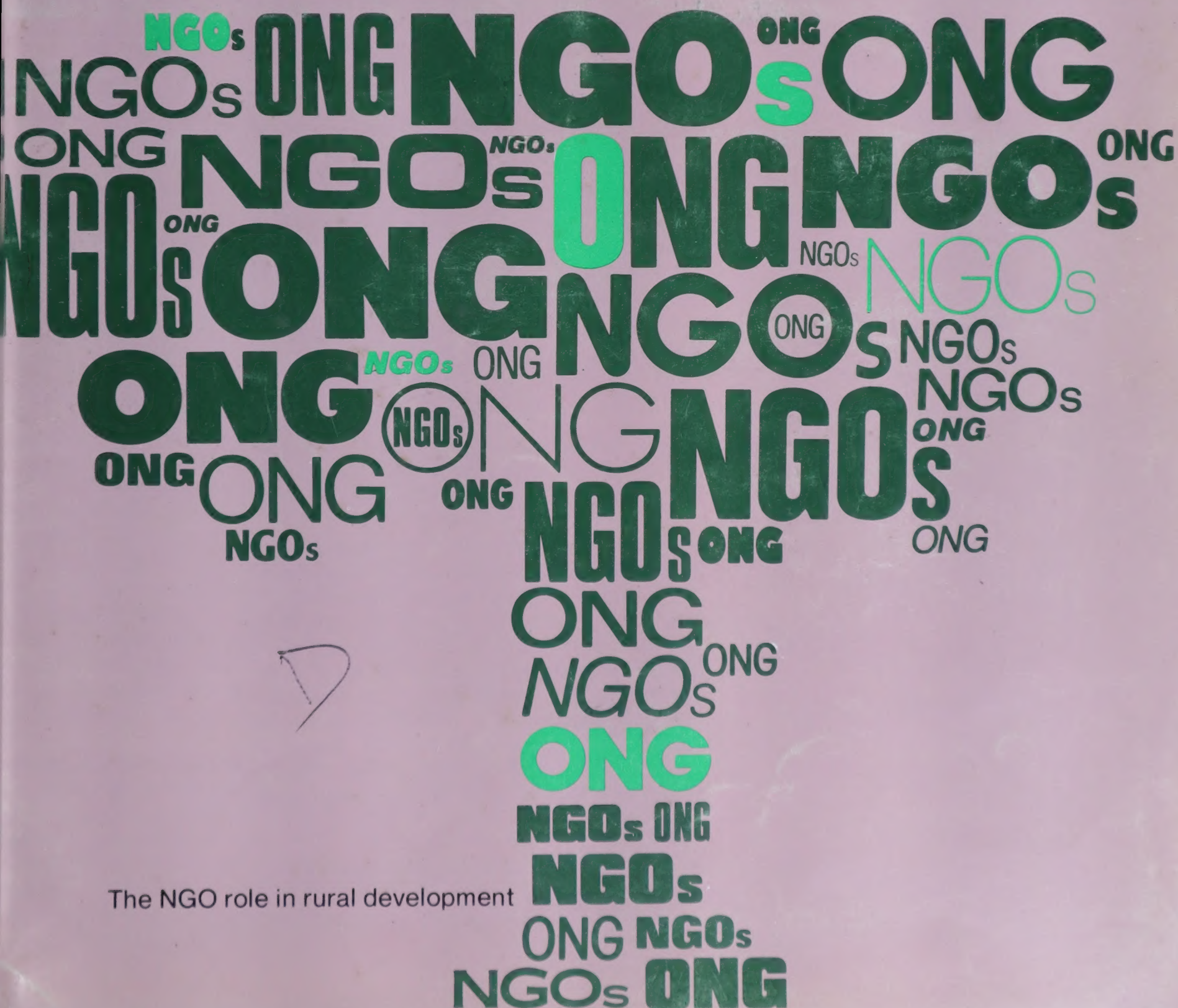


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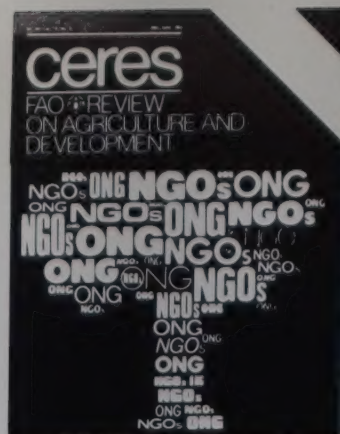
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*In this issue . . . The somewhat traumatic break from time-honoured printing methods has befallen many periodicals in the past decade or so. For Ceres, it has come with this number. In the interests of curbing rising production costs and in the hope of achieving greater flexibility in our production schedule, the practice of bundling off a package of clean-typed manuscripts to an external printer has ended. Instead, edited copy is now keyboarded directly into the "memory" of a compact, innocuous-looking electronic composition unit, then transferred to magnetic cards about the size of a business envelope where it is retained for subsequent corrections and layout instructions.*

*"Instructing" such a device, we have learned, does not necessarily conform to the procedures envisaged in the manufacturer's manual. Perhaps we ought to have expected this, for there is ample conventional wisdom to suggest that most new technology requires a period of adaptation to particular situations. After using the new text-setting processes for a couple of pages in our November-December and January-February numbers and a total of five in our last number, we have decided now to make the complete conversion. In the process we've been obliged to improvise in some instances. The final result is not exactly what we wished, but we have learned how most of the difficulties can be overcome. We hope that our readers will bear with us during this period of adjustment and that all of them will benefit in the long run from this venture with new technology.*

*One idea we dropped during the preparation of this present number on nongovernmental organizations was to design a schematic chart that would neatly categorize all the various kinds of groups that make up the NGO networks across the world. This decision was not a result of the technical problems referred to above; rather we found the pattern presented by NGO organization so kaleidoscopic, so dynamic and diverse that no neat framework could do justice to it. Instead, we hope that our collection of articles, representing NGO leaders from four continents, will reflect that diversity.*

*. . . and next. For our July-August number we are scheduling some articles that will examine experience with some of the various permutations of group farming.*

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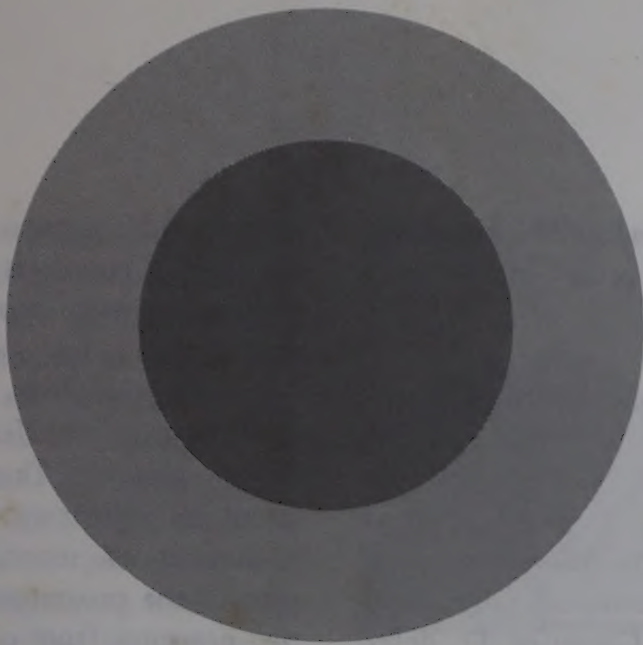
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# Cerescope



## Interim plan for commodity agreements on UNCTAD agenda

Another attempt to end the stalemate in negotiations for a series of international commodity agreements under the umbrella of the Common Fund will occupy a major place on the agenda of the sixth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD VI), which will be meeting in Belgrade during the last three weeks of June. The key proposal being put forward by the UNCTAD secretariat is for an immediate action programme designed to raise commodity export earnings of developing countries by some \$20 billion over a three-year period. The action is required, the secretariat report declares, "not only to safeguard the immediate interests of producers, but also to encourage longer-term investment in productive capacity and to assist in the general recovery of the world economy."

In essence, the UNCTAD proposal calls upon producing and consuming countries to negotiate a series of interim commodity agreements covering only stocking arrangements and supply management measures in order to maintain prices above the distress levels to which they have fallen during the

past two years. The report draws an analogy between its proposed action programme and price support arrangements included in the domestic policies of a number of developed market-economy countries in circumstances of excess supply. It would be, says the report, "in a sense, the extension of such domestic price support policies to the international sphere."

In unveiling the proposal to UNCTAD's Committee on Commodities last February, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Pronk underscored the linkage between the commodity issue and international financial and commodity issues. The collapse in commodity prices, he said, had resulted in a decline in export earnings for developing countries of as much as \$25 billion in the 1980-82 period. This sharp decline "by widening their trade deficits and reducing their ability to repay their loans has also made the world financial system more vulnerable." Mr. Pronk said that the proposed interim commodity arrangements would be time-bound and would be "terminated as soon as market conditions allowed, while the experience gained in their operation should lay a firm basis for the negotiation of longer-term and more comprehensive International Commodity Agreements."

Mr. Pronk suggested that any immediate action programme would have to depend on the Common Fund to take the lead in mobilizing the required financing by borrowing on its account for lending to the International Commodity Agreements and interim arrangements. He also suggested that the buffer stock financing facility of the International Monetary Fund as well as arrangements with the World Bank and regional development banks could be used to provide structural adjustment loans where diversification measures are required. Another proposed method for mobilizing funds would be the application of trade levies to finance carrying costs of stocks and repayment of loans.

The report estimates that the cost of bringing prices of 15 major commodities up to agreed floor levels for those already covered by agreements or to the average level recorded for 1979-82 for other commodities would amount to about \$9 billion at 1981 prices, or approximately 17 percent of the annual value of developing countries' exports of these commodities. Five commodities — cocoa, coffee, rubber, sugar and tin — are presently covered by international agreements. The other ten commodities included in the calculation are: bananas, cotton, jute, sisal, tea, tropical timber, bauxite, copper, iron ore and phosphate rock.

The report estimates that if the programme could be successfully implemented, exporting earnings of the producing countries would be increased in the order of \$20 billion over a three-year period. It maintains that this gain would more than double the value of the stocks withheld from the market and would thus make the scheme "a commercially viable operation."





The report stresses that such interim arrangements would not be intended as a substitute for the much debated Integrated Programme for Commodities (IPC), launched at UNCTAD IV in 1976, which called for creation of the Common Fund and for efforts to achieve 18 individual international commodity agreements. Rather, the report suggests, these should be regarded as "a new element of the IPC, one which will provide a new stimulus to the negotiating process, as well as effectively meeting the immediate needs of commodity producers."

Little progress has been made in negotiating new agreements with economic provisions, rubber being the only commodity added to the list of those covered since the advent of IPC. Moreover, while the Common Fund has 93 signatories, it has been ratified by only 40 governments, 50 short of the 90 required to bring it into force.

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The report sees the failure to establish the Common Fund as an operational institution as the main reason for slow progress in negotiating international commodity agreements. But there have been other factors as well. The report suggests that the rise in commodity prices and export earnings during the 1976-80 period led some developing countries to give low priority to the regulation of commodity markets. Many governments failed to consider the conflicts of interest arising among individual commodity markets in relation to the overall balance of benefits that could be obtained through the implementation of the overall programme. In many cases developing countries appeared unable to evolve and present common proposals for individual commodities while consuming

countries generally adopted a lukewarm attitude toward price stabilization proposals.

The Committee on Commodities meeting served to underline differences in viewpoint among UNCTAD membership that would need to be resolved, or at least softened, if the Belgrade meeting in June is to achieve any significant progress. For the Group of 77, delay in the ratification of the Common Fund agreements should be attributed to "the lack of flexibility of some major developed countries." Moreover, declared the Group's spokesman, Enrique ter Horst of Venezuela, "their reluctance to negotiate international commodity agreements with effective international measures to regulate markets and stabilize commodity prices contrasts with their agricultural policies aimed at stabilizing prices and incomes for their farmers even at the expense of distorting world markets."

Speaking on behalf of developed "Group B" countries, Jean-Daniel Gerber of Switzerland contended that prices should be stabilized around long-term market trends and that "instruments based on economic elements should not be transformed into instruments for the transfer of resources." Frederick McEldowney of the USA described the present problem with commodities as being twofold: "First there is the macro-economic aspect . . . as international recovery progresses, commodity prices and earnings will share the improved overall situation. Secondly there is the aspect which we have been giving our attention to: namely how to reduce price fluctuations along long-term trend lines, how to improve productivity and smooth operation of

markets." He argued that "experience in several countries has shown that commodity price programmes are poor mechanisms for achieving macro-economic objectives. They are highly inefficient in transferring resources to target groups. They deter needed structural adjustments and they require a number of secondary measures to protect the programmes from competitive pressures from outside producers."

As spokesman for the centrally planned economies represented in UNCTAD's "Group D," Gerald Philipp of the German Democratic Republic contended that the role of buffer stocks had been overstated as the exclusive instrument for defending the agreed price range under existing agreements. This approach entailed high expenses unjustified by the results achieved. His group felt that a quota system was the best basis for efforts to balance commodity supply and demand.

In the face of these divergent views, the UNCTAD secretariat pleads the case of common interests for both developing and developed countries: the fall in commodity earnings of the former group results in reduced imports from and deleterious effects upon, the latter group. From the Belgrade meeting there should be some indications as to whether the argument is making headway.



**New surveys probe forest potential for food production**

Scientists working on three continents have almost completed the first systematic survey of a vital, but long neglected, natural resource - forest food



and fruit trees. Commissioned in 1981 by the FAO Forestry Resources Division, the survey will list the uses and cultivation requirements of forest tree species in the Tanzanian savannah and tropical high forests of Brazil and the Philippines. Explains FAO forestry management chief, J.P. Lanly, "The aim is to spread the gospel of preserving and using, not destroying, forest trees, both for their immediate food and ecological

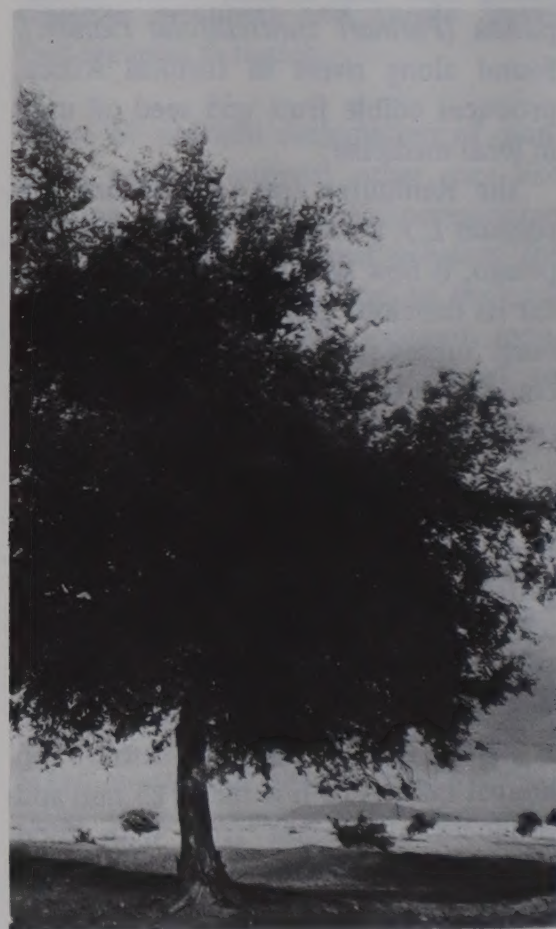


Since then FAO has adopted its own forestry for community development programme to promote forest tree plantations as a source of fuel, building materials, food and fodder for poor rural populations. As part of that programme the Forestry Resources Division published last year a preliminary survey of 42 fruit-bearing forest trees suitable for plantation development. The species listed grow mainly in tropical Africa,



Top: mango trees; above: cashew plantation; right: jujube shrubs; left: Rambutan trees. Planners are only now recognizing the potential of fruit-bearing forest trees in poor rural economies

ample of "forestry for food": the tea-oil (*Thea oleosa*), a small tree that thrives for 100 years or more and produces seeds containing on average 33 percent edible oil. Encouraged by government subsidies, the Chinese have now planted the tea-oil tree over thousands of ha in the southeastern provinces, in large plantations, between agricultural crops and alongside roads, canals and villages. In plantations it produces a reported 100 to 120 kg of oil per ha, enough to satisfy 70 percent of China's edible oil needs as well as supplying lubricant and oil-cake used in pigfeed. For its multiple use and high returns, the FAO team described the humble tea-oil as a "miracle tree" of Chinese forestry.



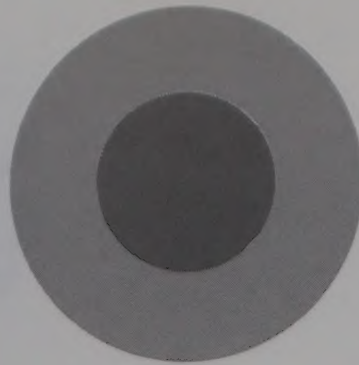
value and their long-term importance as source of genetic material."

The essential role of natural forest trees in poor rural economies is only now being recognized by development planners. In China, however, government policy has for years stressed re-venishment of forests as a source of food and income. In 1977 a FAO study tour of China turned up a striking ex-

ample of "forestry for food": the tea-oil (*Thea oleosa*), a small tree that thrives for 100 years or more and produces seeds containing on average 33 percent edible oil. Encouraged by government subsidies, the Chinese have now planted the tea-oil tree over thousands of ha in the southeastern provinces, in large plantations, between agricultural crops and alongside roads, canals and villages. In plantations it produces a reported 100 to 120 kg of oil per ha, enough to satisfy 70 percent of China's edible oil needs as well as supplying lubricant and oil-cake used in pigfeed. For its multiple use and high returns, the FAO team described the humble tea-oil as a "miracle tree" of Chinese forestry.

Asia and South America and include several species already widely cultivated (such as the mango, brazil nut and cashew trees) and others now being developed as cash crops (the durian in Southeast Asia). But many are still virtually unknown outside their limited native habitats, despite potential for further development. Among them:





tropical Asia, bears a small fruit containing 300 times more vitamin C than an orange;

the Shea butter tree (*Butyrospermum parkii* Kotsely), found in the savannah from Upper Gambia to Uganda, produces seeds which provide the only vegetable fat available to much of the local population;

another interesting African species, the Bush butter tree (*Dacryodes edulis*), yields fruit rich in fats, while the Mapunda (*Parinari curatellifolia* Planch.), found along rivers in tropical Africa, produces edible fruit and seed oil used in local medicine;

the Rambutan tree (*Nephelium lappaceum* L.), a native of the Malay archipelago, is now widely cultivated in Java for its delicious grape-like fruit, and has been successfully grown in Zaire, but could also be planted in some tropical parts of South America.

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Ceres 3/83

The preliminary survey also identified several fruit-bearing forest trees suitable for cultivation in arid zones, where grazing has often destroyed forest stands. One possibility is the India jujube shrub (*Ziziphus mauritiana* Lam.), a hardy species that can survive on annual rainfall of less than 125 mm and produces a pleasant fruit with food value close to that of the banana. More widely known, but still underdeveloped as an arid zone plantation tree, is the Carob, (*Ceratonia siliqua* L.), which produces edible pods rich in protein and sugar, suitable for fodder or human consumption in alcoholic drinks and sherbet. Once passed over in favour of faster growing Eucalyptus and pine species in Mediterranean reforestation projects, the Carob is now being more extensively planted in Cyprus and Greece. How many other "miracle trees" await discovery in the world's forests?

"The simple answer is we don't know," says Mr. Lanly. "Regrettably, tropical food and fruit trees are an almost untouched subject, especially in moist forests which could hold up to two-thirds of all flowering plant species." According to the World Wildlife Fund, only 15 percent of tropical moist forest species have been catalogued and only one percent intensively screened for possible benefits to humanity. Yet human activity - mainly land clearing for agriculture, grazing and timber cutting - continues to destroy 11.3 million ha of tropical forests a year. At stake is an irreplaceable pool of largely unexamined genetic material.

"Deforestation of the tropics could destroy the wild parent species from which many of our present agricultural crops were bred," says FAO forest geneticist Christel Palmberg. "If we lose the original plants we have less choice in future development of the species." The current FAO survey in Brazil, Tanzania and the Philippines is a small but significant step toward fuller understanding and appreciation of the multiple uses of forests. When the results are published (around July, as part of the FAO Forestry Papers series), foresters, agronomists and rural communities will have detailed information on 137 forest food and fruit trees, many of them previously unknown.



#### Management methods for mangrove swamps under investigation

Among the most threatened ecosystems in the world today are the fragile mangrove swamps that cover more than 15 million ha of tropical Africa, Asia and Latin America. Their rich and renew-

able resources, which provide timber, poles, charcoal, palm products and a variety of commercially valuable fish, are being threatened by pollution, land reclamation, forest exploitation and, in some cases, unsuitable aquacultural development.

Comprising forests and saline waters that periodically inundate them, mangroves are the tropical equivalent of the temperate zone salt marsh. They are characterized by the coexistence of plant and marine life in a delicate, if little understood, balance. What is known, however, is that the mangrove system withstands gross interference poorly. Clear-cutting a section of mangrove forest, for example, begins a process of erosion that will adversely affect marine life dependent on the detritus furnished by the forest. Destruction of the mangrove can reduce not only coastal fishery resources but also catches from offshore fishery remote from the forest itself if these are species dependent on the mangrove. Many species of fish, molluscs and crustaceans find food and shelter in the mangrove ecosystem and may depend on it during critical stages of their life cycle. For example, 30 commercially valuable varieties of fishes and crustaceans are associated with the mangroves of peninsular Malaysia. These contribute significantly to the overall fish catch in the area.

Several recommendations for better balancing the interests of production with the continuing productivity of the ecosystem have been put forward in a recent FAO environmental study entitled "The Management and Utilization of Mangroves in Asia and the Pacific." The document calls for environmental impact assessment and socioeconomic





udies upon which land use plans could be formulated. It also recommends increased interdisciplinary research on which to base integrated development programmes in forestry, fisheries and agriculture.

Some of the options available in managing mangrove areas are evident in the case of aquaculture. Coastal fishery output can increase with the use of aquaculture techniques. The most ecologically benign method is open-water aquaculture in which floating cages or stationary pens are introduced with little alteration of the natural condition of the adjacent mangrove area. Open-water aquaculture is generally not destructive to the balance of the mangrove ecosystem.

A potentially more damaging aquaculture technique is the closed pond, where trees are cleared and dikes or

*Mangrove swamps contain a delicate balance of plant and marine life*

other barriers are constructed to retain the brackish water. Where tidal, substrate and water chemistry characteristics are favourable, the yield of fish and shrimp may be considerable. The most manipulative type of pond culture is intensive culture. It involves fertilization, supplementary feeding, pest control and stock manipulation, and yields may reach 2 000 to 3 500 kg/ha a year. Pond culture may introduce the danger of pollution from excess use of fertilizer, feeds and pesticides. Also, some of the mangrove may be lost through clearing for the pond site, buildings, access roads, etc. In Indonesia, there is a system to replant mangroves in pond areas after they have been used for fish or shrimp culture for a number of years.

Mangrove vegetation is also a commercially valuable resource. Mangrove trees have long been a source of poles and timber as well as firewood, wood pulp and tannin. *Rhizophora*, a genus of mangrove tree, produces charcoal of high quality. Mangrove charcoal is, in fact, the main forestry product in Thailand and West Malaysia. Nipa palm, which is suited to cultivation on land regularly inundated by brackish water, produces tender leaves that are used as cigarette wrappers and sturdy leaves that are used as thatch.

Short of outright reclamation of mangrove land to support other uses like housing or agriculture, unrestricted clear-felling of the forest presents the greatest risk of disruption to the ecosystem. Where it has occurred, mangrove forests have been reduced to barren, low scrub.

Proposed as an alternative are forestry management schemes that would include the retention of protective belts along shores and waterways to prevent erosion and serve as seed sources. Then, in cycles that vary from 15 to 30 years, trees are selectively felled or are clear-felled in strips or blocks. Regeneration takes place naturally either from the advanced growth already present or by water-borne seedlings. Extensive replanting of seedlings, though feasible, is only rarely carried out.

An especially productive silviculture method involves the thinning of mangrove stands. Decreasing tree density promotes growth in the remaining trees and results in an eventual increased yield by the forest. Tree growth and detritus provided by mangrove forest management ultimately enriches the marine environment creating a more favourable





habitat for mangrove marine species.

A more detailed follow-up FAO study is now under way; it will cover the mangrove ecosystem of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia and will concern itself with the actual state of the resource, its management and its potential particularly for achieving sustained yield management. Emphasis will be placed upon examining the possibilities for improving the living conditions for the people who live in or close to the mangrove forest and depend upon it for their livelihood.



**In water development,  
Thais want planning  
to start at bottom**

In September 1983, Thai Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanonda will be handing out medals and cash prizes worth US\$4 300 each to 12 farmers' groups from all over the country. The awards — three to each of the country's four regions — will recognize local initiative in water resources development and use, and will be the latest stage in an innovative "bottom up" project aimed at boosting rural living standards.

Although farmers have always formed Thailand's social and economic backbone, they have been largely ignored. And despite recent efforts, they benefit less from national development than do city dwellers.

In water resources development, there are at least two main reasons for this. First, large- and medium-scale projects — implemented by any of 16 government departments in six ministries and planned by either the National Economic and Social Development Board

(NESDE) or the National Energy Authority (NEA) — inevitably miss most of Thailand's 35 million rural dwellers who live outside irrigable areas. Second, none of the large projects, which are centrally planned, "top down" schemes, has so far achieved its potential. Problems include farmers' resentment at imposed "development," plus widespread dissociation that forces the Government to try to operate and



*Thailand is recognizing  
local initiatives in water  
resource development*

maintain the schemes with inadequate resources.

The present project, directed by the Committee for Co-ordination and Acceleration of Water Resources Development (CAWD), reporting directly to the Prime Minister's Office, seeks to plug

the gaps. It is aimed at all parts of the country not covered by major irrigation schemes, and is courting involvement of farmers in local water resource identification and preliminary planning, and in subsequent operations and maintenance.

One of CAWD's most serious problems after its formation in December 1980 was education. Existing line agencies will be building its projects out of normal budgets, but for the bottom up approach to work, farmer groups and lower echelon government officers must be able to identify and prepare useful and technically feasible projects. The line agencies had to adapt to the idea of working with farmers instead of dictating to them.

The result was a series of specialized courses which began in February 1981, developed jointly by the Faculty of Engineering at Khon Kaen University in northeast Thailand and the Continuing Education Centre of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) just north of Bangkok. Separate courses were developed for the two main groups of people — the farmers and the Government — the common goal being better water resources development and use.

At the bottom of CAWD's project cycle are village development committees. These consist primarily of farmers, plus formal farmers' groups. They feed their ideas to the tambol (county) council, which selects and formalizes suitable projects for presentation to the district office. District officials carry out further selection and project planning and send their work up to provincial level and thence to CAWD. CAWD's approval means that the projects must be implemented as sub-



mitted without any change by the line agencies, with each line agency notifying the province, district and tambol of the projects it will implement in the coming year.

Given such extensive government involvement — although in the reverse direction from the usual — the AIT/Khon Kaen courses concentrated on government officers. These courses were labelled Type I and consisted of 8-10 days of lectures, workshops and field trips, all based on Khon Kaen for the northeast region. The full course consisted of 20 modules, selections from which were made according to five categories within Type I. The categories were: government officials with at least a bachelor's degree, those without, qualified engineers in government service, technicians, and community development and agricultural extension workers. In the first academic year, beginning April 1981, 15 Type I courses were held for 600 officials.

Type II courses, for farmers, were three-day events consisting of seven modules. A three-man roving team took the course to the villages, and in the first year, 20 Type IIs reached 800 farm group leaders and tambol council members in seven northeastern provinces.

Although all 1981/82 courses were held in the northeast, the 1982/83 academic year, ending March 1983, carried the same courses to other regions. Five Type Is were held in the central, northern and southern regions, plus three more in the northeast, while 21 Type IIs were spread among all regions. This year, the courses will continue in all regions while, for the following two years, most of the courses will be Type Is, as government officials in each prov-

ince will already have been reached.

Feedback from the courses so far has been mixed. For while, according to AIT's standard evaluation of the first year, "over 90 percent claimed they gained significantly from the course, such gains being relevant and useful to their work," Dr. Apichart Anukularmphai, CAWD's secretary and a former AIT faculty member, is less enthusiastic. "Judging by their (tambol and district level) prioritization of projects," he says, "the scheme is still not up to my expectations. Their understanding of the scheme is still not as good as it should be." For this reason CAWD held a mid-project meeting in February to discuss the problems. "We urged all government officials at all levels to use their authority more in the selection process," said Dr. Apichart, "and emphasized the sequence in the flow chart and the scheme's time frame."

But even Dr. Apichart admits he might be "too much of a perfectionist." For, as he says, all projects under the scheme for 1983 have already been allocated, and allocations for fiscal 1984 are under way. Thus, however imperfectly to begin with, Thai villagers are, for the first time, being given a say in local development and this process can only improve. For one thing, Dr. Apichart expects to have a "cookbook manual," an illustrated step-by-step guide to small water resource identification and planning, ready for distribution to all past, present and future course members by April this year; and General Prem's involvement, and the prizes, will increase the range of benefits to be derived from the project from just development.

Another indication of the training

programme's success is that the Philippines have used the Type I course for their own people, while Sri Lanka has shown interest in the entire concept. Hopefully other countries will follow — for bottom up water resources development is finally off the drawing boards and, a little shakily, in operation.



**Land use patterns  
from earlier era  
urged for Namibia**

Long before Europeans began to intrude upon their territory nearly a century ago, the native inhabitants of what is now Namibia were practising forms of agriculture and land use based on traditions of cooperation and sharing that contrasted sharply with the authoritarian, exploitative methods of settler farming which largely displaced them. Largely, but not completely. Some of the old indigenous methods of land use are still practised by peasant farmers in Namibia. What is more, argues Richard Moorsom, a scholar and writer specializing in Namibian history and politics, these surviving precolonial traditions will remain highly relevant to the principles and objectives of rural development when Namibia achieves independent status.

In his book, *Transforming a Wasted Land(1)*, Moorsom details how both the agricultural policies introduced by German colonizers and the present illegal occupation of the UN-mandated territory by South Africa have led to impoverishment and severe ecological damage. These factors, Moorsom maintains, have contributed much more to the country's present agricultural crisis than have drought and prolonged strife.





The region's uncertain rainfall patterns enforced among native livestock producers a constant mobility in the search for pasture and water for their cattle, sheep and goats. Even where average rainfall was sufficient, field agriculture was limited in extent, though some tenuous agricultural settlements arose in a few areas where the winter water supply was adequate. To compensate for low soil fertility and waterlogged conditions during the rainy season, sandy topsoil was worked with hoes into small mounds which were then manured and planted by hand. Pasturing of cattle on harvest stubble and frequent rotation of the homestead sites contributed to the long-term build-up of soil fertility. Principal crops were drought-resistant grains, mainly millet and, to a lesser extent, sorghum, complemented by a range of beans, nuts and vegetables. Melons and pumpkins were invaluable in times of drought. Farther east, in what is now known as the Caprivi Strip, heavier rainfall made possible the cultivation of maize at some distance from the swampy margins of the Zambezi river and its tributaries. In the rest of Namibia, the only cultivation was in small garden plots, usually near springs.

While the onset of colonialism was linked to the search for mineral wealth, it also resulted in the wholesale seizure of land for the benefit of white settlers. Though dispossessed tribes such as the Herero, Damara and Nama fought valiantly against this intrusion, they were obliged to withdraw and suffered enormous losses.

Moorsom's book details how native populations were subsequently exploited to provide cheap contract labour for mines and white settlements. The impact can

be measured from present land distribution patterns: 80 percent of all good stockraising land is owned by about 5 000 white ranchers, while 20 000 black families share the remaining 20 percent. In the far north of Namibia about 120 000 black families are crowded into just five percent of the total viable farmland.

Today, however, the carefully planned and segregated settlers' ranches are beginning to disintegrate. The liberation movement of the Southwest African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) has disrupted farming in the northern reserves of the country to such an extent that many white landlords have abandoned their holdings, which are now in *de facto* possession of black farmworkers and peasants.

Moorsom believes that the present agrarian framework in Namibia has to be broken down before independence is achieved. "The direction of post-independent rural development policy," he writes, "will hinge upon the extent to which the coming Namibian government can win the freedom to implement the declared political commitment to the ending of injustice, inequality and exploitation. Justice demands that land and the fruits of the land be far more widely shared than at present."

The political programme enunciated by SWAPO in 1976 opposes the division of Namibian agriculture into commercial settle-owned and residual peasant sectors. Specifically, it envisages "a comprehensive agrarian transformation aimed at giving the land to the tiller."

There have already been some cooperative ranching ventures that have succeeded in preventing land from being

further concentrated among wealthy owners. One useful precedent is the 10 000 ha farm at the Catholic Mission of Epurkiri which has been transferred to the control of the local village of about 100 households. The villagers have elected a council to control the farm. While cattle, up to a maximum of 30 head, are held by individual households, they are managed as one unit, and the council has purchased a separate herd of its own. Four men are hired full time to look after the herd and maintain the water points.

A key problem in Namibia today is the necessity of importing food, a situation that has arisen in part from government policies favouring production of meat and pelts for export at the expense of both food crops and dairying. Moorsom argues that a future government would do well to remove this bias. Considering that Namibia's population is small, its cereal and dairy needs could be met from small areas of the country that are relatively well-suited to crops.

(1) Richard Moorsom, *Transforming a Wasted Land* (The Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, 1982).



**"Poor man's meat,"  
pulses lose ground  
to cereal expansion**

Plants are just like human beings: affinities bring them together or keep them apart, they feel attraction or repulsion for each other, and sometimes they marry for love or for other reasons. So it is with cereals and legumes. A recent FAO paper, "Legumes in Human Nutrition," (1) confirms this: "Legumes and cereals have traditionally been linked. They complement each



Table 1 Cereals and pulses

Continent	Food group	Production 1969 (in 1 000 t)	Yield 1969 (in kg/ha)	Production 1979 (in 1 000 t)	Yield 1979 (in kg/ha)
World	Total cereals	1 204 424	1 709	1 553 076	2 041
	Total pulses	46 965	700	51 873	715
Africa	Total cereals	58 951	905	66 480	918
	Total pulses	4 759	423	5 103	433
North and Central America	Total cereals	258 321	2 878	356 703	3 619
	Total pulses	2 660	797	3 004	922
South America	Total cereals	47 115	1 404	63 602	1 685
	Total pulses	2 806	602	3 195	577
Asia	Total cereals	473 731	1 513	629 984	1 831
	Total pulses	25 228	669	31 057	710
Europe	Total cereals	196 639	2 703	239 984	3 407
	Total pulses	3 563	729	2 545	851
Oceania	Total cereals	15 199	1 168	24 312	1 476
	Total pulses	103	1 149	169	902
USSR	Total cereals	154 556	1 315	172 011	1 418
	Total pulses	7 846	1 513	6 800	1 352

Source: FAO

ther agriculturally in terms of cropping patterns, and nutritionally, with legumes bringing necessary nutrients and variety to a diet based on cereals."

However, their respective progress has not run parallel over the past ten years, with cereal production increasing at a much faster rate than that of legumes. Although the figures show this trend very clearly (see Table 1), the FAO paper is careful to point out that those for legumes cannot, despite all research, be taken as absolutely accurate. Cereal production is today relatively well known, but that of legumes is difficult to estimate because they are often intercropped with other plants, their yields are uncertain, and they are more likely to be consumed by the farmer's family than to come on the local market.

It has, however, been calculated that the proportion of pulses to cereals grown has decreased from 3.9 percent in 1969 to 3.4 percent in 1979. According to the study, there are two reasons for this relative decline. First, the traditional caution of farmers prevents them from allocating too high a proportion of their land to pulses because of their low yields, uncertain harvests, slow maturation, the sensitivity of the legume to growing conditions at all periods of development, and the magnitude of losses caused by pests. The second reason is that modern technologies in agriculture (in particular the green revolution) have improved cereals more than any other crop.

Despite all this, legume production has recovered slightly, in absolute value, over the past ten years. In developing countries this recovery is mainly due to

increased government support for prices, favourable weather in India and large-scale land reclamation in North China, where pulses fit well into the cropping pattern.

Consumption of legumes is inversely related to that of food derived from animal products. This is probably due to the time-honoured designation of legumes as "the poor man's meat," which implies a meat substitute. "The notion that legumes were valuable in this way was dimly realized before the demonstration of their high protein content by chemical analysis.

It is also natural that access to a meat diet following an increase in income should be to the detriment of cereals, but still more so to that of legumes; FAO estimates that in developed countries, during the ten years prior to 1977, the daily supply of energy per caput from cereals dropped by 8.7 percent, and that from pulses by 19.4 percent. In the developing countries, while energy per caput from cereals rose by 8.2 percent, that from pulses dropped by 10.4 percent. "Estimated supplies of pulses per caput," continues the study, "have remained fairly stable, but they have dropped by 10.9 percent in Asia and 17.6 percent in Latin America." This reaction is hardly surprising in view of the respective changes in the food situation of the three continents.

Nevertheless, even with a considerable increase in income, there would be certain limitations on the drop in pulse consumption - those imposed by gastronomy, when all other considerations become secondary. The French *cassoulet* (a stew made with pulses), Chinese dishes made with soybeans, African ones with groundnuts and Latin





American ones with chickpeas are, let us hope, not yet on the verge of disappearance.

(1) W.R. Aykroyd and Joyce Doughty, "Legumes in Human Nutrition," *FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 20*.



### Deer husbandry is a booming industry for New Zealand

In the last 10 years New Zealanders have learned how to farm deer on a large scale. Now it has become so profitable that these forest animals have replaced sheep on many New Zealand pastures. Along the country roads it is common to see tall fences surrounding the graceful animals quietly grazing on ryegrass and clover.

For perhaps the first time deer are under true farm management. There are stud stags, artificial insemination for breed improvement and veterinary services for deer. The animals are herded by sheep dogs (which must be retained to command the herd by "presence" rather than by bark or bite). Herds of up to 80 are shifted by trucks. Deer auctions and deer shows are held regularly. Deer farmers have a professional association and a monthly magazine. And government scientists pro-

duce pamphlets on the care and management of deer.

New Zealand established its first deer farm in 1970. Now there are over 2 000, containing more than 200 000 deer, a number that should more than double in the next few years because most farmers are building up their herds.

New Zealand began deer farming because deer were swarming over the native forests in such numbers that slopes were denuded by overgrazing. And after deer had browsed and trampled out the vegetation, rain swept soil into the valleys. Towns and farms were flooded, hydroelectric dams began silting up, and huge scars of erosion defaced the land.

But New Zealand no longer considers these forest dwellers a widespread problem. Farmers have hired so many helicopters to haul the animals to their farms that the forests are now largely free of deer.

Deer farming has become so popular that if current trends continue, New Zealand will become the world's veni-

*A pasture that supports one cow will support four deer*

son capital. Venison is a highly prized lean meat, with 70 percent less fat than beef or lamb. It is also low in cholesterol.

New Zealand scientists have found that farmed deer are more nervous than conventional livestock and need special handling. Farmed deer grow much faster than had been expected. They are seldom affected by disease. They require only a third of the feed that lambs need to put on the same weight; they have almost twice as much first-class meat as sheep of similar size. A pasture that supports one cow will support four deer.

This development has important implications for many other countries. Deer are found in forests throughout much of the world and there are few if any cultural or religious taboos against eating venison as there are against pork and beef. Already Papua New Guinea has a rural deer farming project copied from the New Zealand example. Deer farming is also increasing in Australia, China, Scotland, the United States and other countries. Deer browse shrubs and graze coarse grasses that cattle and sheep do not eat. They may help to improve meat production in many tropical and subtropical forests.





# FAO IN ACTION

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## A BROADER CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

A new, broader concept of food security has won approval from the FAO statutory body responsible for food security matters. At its 8th session last April, the 97-Member Committee on Food Security endorsed the concept formulated in a report presented to it by FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma. (See *Ceres*, March-April 1983, page 13.) "Food security," the report states, "should have three specific aims, namely ensuring production of adequate food supplies; maximizing stability in the flow of supplies and securing access to available supplies on the part of those who need them." The Committee agreed with the Director-General on the need for national measures backed up by regional and global arrangements and through FAO to achieve world food security. The Committee confirmed its own role as "the only intergovernmental body in the UN system exclusively charged with monitoring, evaluating and consulting on the world food security situation." It concurred with the need for closer cooperation among all international organizations dealing with food security problems. Some of the report's proposals that were of a preliminary nature will be followed up at subsequent sessions.

## PLANS MADE TO CHECKSPREAD OF RINDERPEST

A proposal for a 10-year, \$83 million pan-African campaign against rinderpest, an acutely fatal disease of ruminants which is presently striking hard at livestock in 11 countries, will be placed before a donors' meeting in Brussels in early June. The campaign, which would be carried out as a joint activity of FAO, the European Economic Community (EEC), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) would cover 28 countries and involve 120 million head of cattle. At a meeting in Rome last April of representatives of these and other concerned organizations, FAO reported that serious outbreaks of rinderpest have recently been detected in Mali, Upper Volta, Ghana, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and Tanzania. The situation was especially grave in the Sudan, where 30 000 cattle were estimated to have died last year, in Nigeria where 152 outbreaks were reported up to March 1983, and in southern Chad. A previous multidonor campaign in the 1960s had markedly reduced incidence of the disease, but did not succeed in eradicating it, and a significant resurgence occurred in 1980. Since then, FAO has provided about \$1.6 million to support national emergency campaigns in 15 African countries.

## NEW BODY TO MONITOR AFRICA'S FOOD CRISIS

FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma said that the resurgence of rinderpest was one element in Africa's food problem that led him to create a special FAO/WFP Task Force to review the food supply situation and monitor systematically the production of staple foods in a number of African countries for the crop years 1982-83 and 1983-84. In order to meet basic food requirements in 1982-83, 17 countries with a total population of 118 million may have to increase their cereal imports, either on commercial terms or through food aid, to 4.1 million tons, which is more than a million tons above the import level of the previous year.

## DECLINE PREDICTED IN COARSE GRAINS OUTPUT

In its first cereal forecast for 1983, FAO's monthly "Food Outlook" report predicted a drop in world coarse grain production from last year's record 806 million tons to somewhere between 715 and 775 million tons, mainly due to reduced US plantings. The estimate for world wheat production was put in the range of from 430 million to 485 million tons com-



pared with the 477 million tons produced last year. World cereal stocks at the end of the 1982/83 season were expected to increase to 329 million tons, 54 million tons more than at the end of the previous crop year, with virtually all of the increase in the United States. But these relatively abundant supplies, the report noted, "mask the deteriorating food supply situation in a number of low-income food deficit countries," especially in parts of Africa where drought continues.

## INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES SHOW GAIN IN 1982

FAO's Investment Centre activities increased considerably during 1982, resulting in total investments of \$2 538 million in 48 Centre-assisted projects, compared with \$2 070 million in 44 projects during the previous year. General agricultural development and irrigation and drainage projects accounted for about two-thirds of the total outlay. In 1982 the Centre was involved in identifying or preparing 131 projects in 67 countries. The 498 projects in which the Centre has been involved since its founding in 1966 now represent a total investment of more than \$22 000 million.

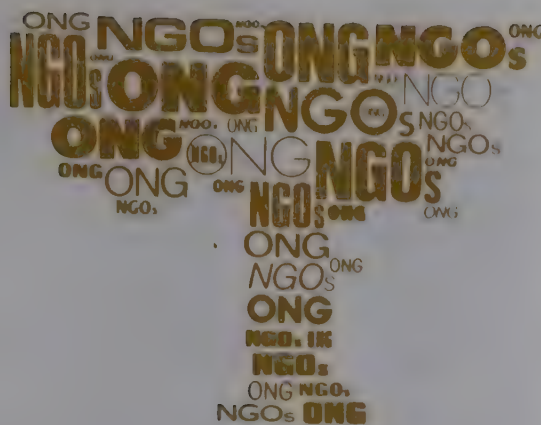
## CHILE STRENGTHENS FORESTRY EXPERTISE

Two concepts increasingly discussed in international development circles – the greater involvement of national institutions in technical assistance programmes and technical cooperation between developing countries – are getting some practical exposure in an FAO/UNDP forestry project in Chile. The project's wide-ranging activities have included the elaboration of a national forestry research programme, preparation of a continuous natural inventory model, evaluation and promotion of improved forest plantation practices, economic analyses of forest reserves, the study of supply and demand trends for forest products, and national parks management. During the past four years practically all project activities have been undertaken by national institutions; FAO provides only technical and operational backstopping and coordination. Forestry research in the country has been stimulated through 24 subcontracts totalling almost US \$750 000 that FAO issued to national institutions. Postgraduate fellowships and study tours have enabled 100 Chilean forestry specialists to acquaint themselves with latest forestry practices abroad. Chilean forestry experts are now contributing actively to forest-based development in the rest of Latin America and in Africa.

## MAURITANIA TESTS EARLY RICE VARIETIES

The introduction of early-maturing varieties of rice well adapted to the ecoclimatic conditions of the middle Senegal valley in Mauritania is beginning to pay off in yield increases. When combined with improved cultural techniques the new varieties have achieved yields of 5.5 to 6.0 tons per ha. Among practices that can make a significant difference in yield: delays in replanting beyond 25 days after seeding can reduce yields per ha in the order of 200 kg per day. Closer planting (0.15 x 0.15 m rather than 0.25 x 0.25 m) can improve yields by 700 kg per ha. Other aims of this applied research project, in which FAO/UNDP are providing technical assistance to Mauritania's National Centre for Agronomic Research and Agricultural Development (CNRADA), include feasibility studies on double and triple cropping both for rice alone and with other cereals, low-cost protection against disease, pests and weeds, small- and intermediate-scale mechanization, and postharvest technology.





In July 1979, the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) was convened in Rome under the auspices of FAO, with the aim of bringing together international agencies and the world community at large to discuss strategies for the promotion of rural development and the eradication of hunger and malnutrition.

In a review of the international situation prior to the Conference, the opinion was expressed that plans formulated by the developing countries for guiding their own development were merely gestures of good intentions rather than concrete programmes of action that could transform the poverty and backwardness of the rural sectors into prosperity and general improvements. Growth, the dominant goal, had been known to be of little relevance to actual redistributive objectives of development. The review concluded:

Rural poverty was increasing.

The rate of growth was not in direct proportion to reduction of rural poverty. That is, poverty increased as rapidly in countries with high growth rates as in countries with low ones.

There was no clear relationship between poverty and the land-man ratio. That is, poverty worsened as rapidly in countries with relatively abundant land as in those with less land per inhabitant.

In general it was found that trends in growth in most developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s showed that the benefits of growth and development favoured large farmers and landowners

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## Popular participation in rural development

That means planning of priorities as well as providing the workforce

by James A. Aremo

as well as the urban enclaves to the detriment of the rural poor and the landless.

Although the World Food Conference of 1974 addressed itself to the problems of declining food production and the poor status of world food security, WCARRD dealt more specifically with the long recognized imbalances between the small enclaves of the modern sectors and the vast disadvantaged rural masses in the developing countries. Particular concern was expressed about the lack of people's participation in decision making in the design and implementation of projects and programmes ostensibly intended to improve their lot. The minimal participation of women in this process was singled out as especially detrimental to the development effort since women are the principal food producers in developing countries. In

this connection, particular note was taken of the positive role that had been played and can be played by NGOs.

The programme of action adopted by WCARRD included the following guidelines and principles relevant to people's participation in rural development and agrarian reform:

- that policies and programmes affecting agrarian and rural systems should be formulated and implemented with the full understanding and participation of all rural people, including youth, and of their own organizations at all levels, and that development efforts should be responsive to the varying needs of different groups of the rural poor;
- that understanding and awareness of the problems and opportunities of rural development among the people at all levels and that improving the interaction between development personnel and the masses through effective communications are prerequisites for the success of rural development;
- that women should participate and contribute on an equal basis with men in the social economic and political processes of rural development and share fully in improved conditions of life in the rural areas.

FAO was charged with the responsibility of implementing the plan of action in cooperation with governments and the international community as a whole.

Since the end of the WCARRD Conference, many efforts have been made by governments and FAO in particular to see that the plan of action is implemented. The experience in Africa has been rather pathetic. It is being discovered that mobilization of the masses for popular participation in decision making is easier said than done.



The relationship between the official government agencies and the NGOs has not always been a happy one

In all cases efforts at governmental level to organize for the people's participation in rural development projects have met with numerous constraints, among which one can mention lack of manpower and financial resources and lack of serious political commitment. Experience has shown that popular participation in rural development can only be achieved either in an institutional framework organized by the people themselves in terms of cooperatives or self-help groups or where NGOs have had a bigger role to play. With particular reference to Kenya, experience has shown that the success of the "Harambee" effort can also be traced to the impetus provided by some local NGOs. As a matter of fact, NGOs have become significant agents for promoting rural development in this country, and as a consequence have been given what encouragement and support can be afforded.

While in many African countries, the important collaborative role played by NGOs has been given due recognition, the relationship between the official government agencies and the NGOs has not always been a happy one. Part of the problems that have confronted NGOs in their interaction with governments can be traced to their origin, their financial and political support, and sometimes their conflicting objectives. This brings us to the fundamental question of what are NGOs and what role have they played given their mandates and general objectives vis-à-vis the stated government objectives and strategies.

**Origins of NGOs in Africa.** The history of the establishment, development and growth of NGOs in Africa is varied and sometimes difficult to understand:

NGOs that grew from community organizations and self-help groups. The traditional African social organizations have a strong base of kinship and tribal interrelationships. Most African communities still live in villages where kinship is the strongest bond uniting people: it is the most important determinant of roles to be played in the community in both cultural and economic activities. In most cases, land, the basic productive asset, is owned communally, and in most cases, the right to cultivate land was always based on the decision of the village elders. In establishing facilities for common use, more often collective action was required.

While this basic mode of social organization is being slowly eroded with modernization, it has provided the base of most of the self-help organizations and groups in modern Africa. With the emergence of the aspirations to modernization, some of the self-help groups eventually evolved into recognized NGOs. These groups have organized themselves for communal cultivation of land and construction of schools, health centres, water facilities, roads, etc. It is important to note that in Africa the contribution of women to the activities of these groups has always far outweighed that of men. In the case of Tanzania, these groups have been officially reorganized to form the basis of the Ujamaa Villages. NGOs of this category, where there is little official interference, are true people's institutions.

**Church-based NGOs.** With the advent of colonialism in Africa, the mother churches of Europe and America sought to establish organizations and societies not only to promote the spiritual faith but also to provide for the material improvements of their followers. Today in Africa, a large majority of NGOs are based around various churches and denominations. Some of these are indigenous and more or less autonomous from the mother churches, while a good number are organized from overseas.

Like the self-help groups, these are usually quite independent of government interference. Though in some cases,



government inputs of money and personnel have been significant.

**NGOs linked to overseas voluntary organizations (nondenominational).** Some of the NGOs in Africa were started as offshoots of international voluntary organizations, prominent among which are the National FFHC/AD Committees which exist in a number of African countries and the Red Cross Society, which is the international society for the relief of those that are in distress.

**NGOs sponsored by national governments.** Although NGOs of this category are difficult to describe as truly nongovernmental, they do conduct their own affairs. These have been more or less sponsored by the government to meet specific needs of groups of people, and they tend to be national in orientation and outlook. In a country like





In Africa, women have always been more active in self-help groups than have men

In Tanzania they have come wholly within the purview of the government.

As has been stated above, the NGOs in Africa have varied historical backgrounds. This is reflected in the kind of activities and the role each one plays in the socioeconomic development of the societies concerned. Not all of these NGOs have been instrumental in promoting rural development and the implementation of the WCARRD Plan of action. Not all of them have succeeded. In fact they have met very serious drawbacks in their operations. An evaluation of the role of NGOs in development efforts shows that they favour projects that are designed to improve the living conditions of the people, especially the rural poor,

through their active participation in the process of development.

**Successes of African NGOs.** In general, the objectives of NGOs in African countries were to address problems associated with poverty, hunger and distress. Some NGOs have confined themselves to relief operations in times of disasters and distress, while others have sought to address development problems of the poor and most disadvantaged communities. In all cases, however, the NGOs have succeeded in the following ways:

– *Intervention where need is most felt.* I have seen in Kenya and other African countries agreement that since NGOs do not have resources comparable to those of the national governments, they have tended to select projects that meet the true needs of the people at the time that this is most required. Most of their projects have therefore been small; these

are easy to manage and implement. This has been particularly so with projects designed for increased food production. While it is true that the long-term effect of these intervention programmes cannot be known, it is safe to say that what has been achieved is positive and has had a very significant effect on the procedure for project design in some African countries. I think this is particularly so in the case of Kenya.

– *Creating awareness among the communities.* One of the most outstanding contributions to development efforts by NGOs in Africa has been that they have proved to be channels through which the people increase their awareness about their depressed situation and the need to tackle their problems through their own efforts.

In most cases, NGOs have succeeded in mobilizing the people's efforts for food production at community levels. Hence, in many parts of Africa, NGOs have provided the technical advice, provided for inputs on reasonable terms (grant basis) and food-for-work activities.

– *Mobilizing resources for development.* The majority of NGOs in Africa have also proved to be convenient channels through which both domestic and foreign resources have been mobilized for community-based projects. In Kenya, for example, the Harambee efforts are based on the people themselves organizing their own resources before the Government can step in with its own contribution. In fact in Kenya, this policy is firmly encouraged. This is true also in the case of Tanzania, where the Ujamaa philosophy encourages self-sufficiency.

Comparing the resources mobilized for development efforts in the last decade by local and overseas-based NGOs, one sees that the foreign-linked NGOs, because of the comparative wealth of the countries of origin, have provided large amounts for development at community levels. In general, these NGOs have provided resources that filled crucial gaps, which national governments, with their limited resources, could not have done.

**Constraints and conflicts.** Not all the



Too often  
land reform laws  
are merely cosmetic,  
and the machinery  
of the state does  
not enforce them  
against the opposition  
of vested interests

activities of NGOs in Africa have succeeded, mainly because of the type of projects they generally favour, i.e., projects designed to improve the living conditions of the people, especially the rural poor, through their active participation in the process of development.

Tackling rural poverty effectively requires in addition to the people's cooperation, a radical political change and reorientation of a nation's economic and social organizations. Most rural poor are people without access to resources, i.e., land, food, clothing, shelter, education and health services.

In spite of many food production projects promoted by NGOs and governments, the landless poor cannot be expected to benefit much, because they will remain farm labourers and live at the mercy of landlords. The efforts of NGOs against poverty will continue to be frustrated and defeated unless government concerns equitably redistribute the land to peasants so that they can either individually or collectively use it to meet their needs.

Experience suggests that where the ownership of land is inequitable securing change is not just a question of passing land reform legislation. Most countries now have some kind of land reform laws, but too often they are merely cosmetic. Often, too, the machinery of the state does not enforce them against the opposition of local or international vested interests.

It is generally recognized that NGOs and governments by themselves cannot achieve rural development. They can only facilitate it. It is therefore necessary to work through self-help groups and cooperative societies. Rural devel-

opment is people's development of themselves, their lives and environment.

Unfortunately, in practically all the African countries, the cooperative and self-help by-laws are meant to restrict the power of the people to take their own decisions on their own projects. In fact, ministers and chief officers whose portfolios cover these institutions have overriding powers over them. These government officers reserve the powers to register, disband and appoint a commission to run them and to approve their budget and development plans. Laws ostensibly meant to protect the members' interest instead usurp their powers. Efforts by NGOs to make the people better able to control their activities within the framework of their own institutions are therefore being frustrated.

In many of the so-called successful self-help projects or cooperatives, the people's participation is restricted to physical labour and is excluded from planning and determination of priorities. In most cases, government authorities act on behalf of the people as if the people had no ideas of their own. This is quite wrong. At every stage of development people do know what their basic needs are. And just as they will produce their own food if they have land, so if they have sufficient freedom, can they be relied upon to determine their own priorities of development and then to work for them.

Since most NGOs are by and large voluntary organizations, the resources for employing qualified project planning and management staff are limited. The projects are usually poorly prepared and the managers are either illiterate or poorly trained. Because of this, NGOs in Africa rely heavily on assistance from the central government authorities for project design and supervision. This is often the chance for governments to get involved in their activities to the detriment of their autonomy and independence.

In examining the African situation, one finds that politics invariably get into the operations of the NGOs. For one thing, political considerations can influence

the size of projects, where they are to be established, and what amount of resources can and cannot be made available to some projects. Successful projects are often used for furthering the political ambitions of local politicians.

NGOs with foreign links have come under suspicion and been accused of introducing foreign influence and ideologies. This kind of hostility has always prevented the full realization of the activities supported by the NGOs.

The interface between the day to day activities of governments and those of NGOs can only be correctly understood if the history and the objectives of a particular NGO are correctly understood. As was generally accepted at the International FFHC/AD Consultation in December 1980, the potential role of NGOs in the implementation of the WCARRD Plan of Action is much greater than that of governments. In Africa, efforts to organize follow-up activities on the Plan of Action have proved fruitless at regional levels, and governments themselves have not shown the required reorientation towards greater emphasis on the follow-up activities enshrined in the plan of action than on the continuation of programmes and projects embodied in the development plans.

As in the case of Kenya, if governments are committed to giving all the necessary support to NGOs, the full potential of NGOs' promotion of rural development and the fight against hunger can be reached. In countries where this principle is not recognized, improvement in the welfare of the needy will not be met for a long time to come.

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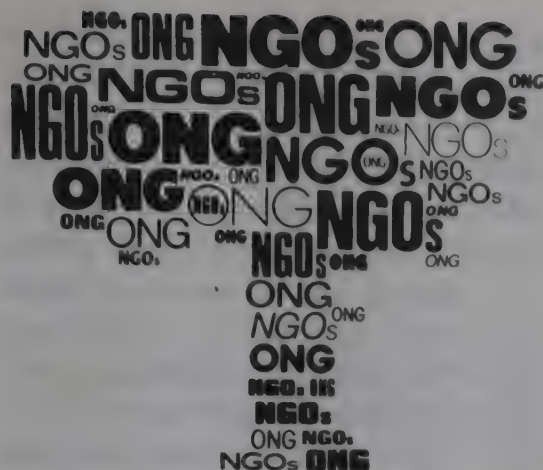
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## Development is not a politically neutral task

NGOs involved in social mobilization are likely to be suspect in government circles

The term NGO represents a broad, varied and somewhat confused universe. Normally the term denotes organizations that are different from the state apparatus, are organized voluntarily and endeavour to achieve various goals. They include universities, research centres, craft and union organizations as well as private associations working at the grass roots in implementing development projects and programmes. In this article I am concerned with one kind of NGO, the voluntary agency (VA) which represents a private, nonprofit voluntary association dedicated to the design, study and implementation of development projects at the grass-roots level. The VAs stress direct-action-oriented projects, often combining these activities with study and research. They are legally constituted (e.g., in India, under the Societies Registration Act, 1861). Their funds come from within the organization as well as from both foreign sources and the government. Their target groups are those sectors of the population known as the marginalized sectors — often not attended to in their demands for basic needs and human rights.(1)

This article attempts to discuss the

relationship between VAs and their governments and reasons for mutual suspicion and tension, and to examine possibilities of cooperation and joint action. Most of my analyses will be based on the Indian experience, particularly of the last ten years.

India's poverty, unemployment, inequality and regional disparities have all been variously analyzed.(2) Two areas however, need to be pointed out. One is the increasing pauperization and marginalization of the people in the unorganized sectors — notwithstanding a plethora of official and nonofficial schemes to initiate development. The second is the sharply escalating conflict, in both the countryside and the cities, as the battle for survival becomes more intense. The very magnitude of the task calls for an open and fresh look at a multiplicity of strategies and organizations. There is, in a nutshell, enough work for all.

The Sixth Five Year Plan reiterates the national emphasis on rural development and rural services. It explicitly recognizes the need for popular participation as well as for organization of the rural poor if the benefits of planned development are to reach those they are intended to. It has also admitted the limited role that officials and official

agencies can play in such a venture, hamstrung as they are by their rules and regulations. One would have expected that the VAs would flourish in such an environment, but that is hardly the case. The bureaucracy has never said in black and white that NGOs do not have a place and role in the development process, but in practice the idea of the NGOs' being mobilized for development purposes has been looked upon with much suspicion, perhaps with valid reason.

**Reasons for conflict.** Part of the hesitation about NGOs comes from the tremendous heterogeneity that the term conceals. NGOs differ from one another on many counts, for example, ideology, objectives, working styles, social composition, funding and support sources and size of organization. It is not easy to define a response to this range of organizations and activities.

Most official opposition to NGOs comes from the governmental perception of these organizations. It is assumed that all NGOs are composed of humble, dedicated, motivated and sincere workers. This is surprising because similar assumptions are not made about politicians and officialdom. Thus, when NGOs do not conform to this unrealistic, idealized image — since more often



Because most NGOs are small and operate in a single place, they can respond quickly to local demands

they are interpreted as fronts for has-been politicians and social workers or *sub rosa* fronts for political parties — there is a tendency to dismiss the entire lot.(3)

More fundamental than the heterogeneity and image problems that all NGOs have to face is a series of structural parameters that lead to instability and a high mortality rate in most voluntary attempts.

Most NGOs are small and operate in a single place, qualities that give them advantages over other organizations. Being small, they rarely face the problems of hierarchy and bureaucracy that restrict their larger cousins — the official development agencies. They can respond swiftly and efficiently to the local demands. Being locally based, they are aware of the local environment and are responsive to it. Not having to perform such “unpleasant” tasks as levying taxes or maintaining law and order, most NGOs develop close links with the groups that they intend to serve. Paradoxically, these very strengths — of size and local nature — are often powerful fetters. The small size precludes most groups from taking up tasks of a larger magnitude. Their strong involvement with their locality often embroils them in local politics, and in pandering to demands they do not always keep the larger interests of the region or country in mind. After all, issues do not always have a local origin, or even a local solution. In the absence of a larger vision and limited range of effectiveness, most NGOs turn into local pressure groups.

It is common knowledge that most NGOs draw their leading cadres from among the motivated and radicalized

middle class. Normally these cadres are more professionally qualified than the local development bureaucracy. Their professional competence and motivated idealism both sustain their work in far-off locations with deprived sections of the population and provide a competitive cutting edge and cost effectiveness against the official development agency. Again, this very strength can become a source of instability and weakness.

The middle-class cadres have generally been found to be notoriously fickle. They go into such work with a strong sense of idealism and self-sacrifice. These values however require an environment (as for instance in the National Movement for Independence) or an extremely charismatic leadership to sustain them. This, as all of us are painfully aware, is rarely available. Once the initial euphoria wears off, the

normal pressures of settling down, assuming family responsibility, etc., begin to become intense. Most cadres feel that their professional qualities are not being put to full use, and that they would benefit from working in a better organized environment. Isolation, lack of companionship and intellectual stimulation, even the physical deprivation that development workers have to face — all contribute to high degree of transience.

Since most NGOs are critically dependent upon such cadres, they can rarely sustain this loss and often fold up. The attempts to replace the external cadres with locally trained ones — an objective of most groups — has unfortunately not proved very successful. This is not b

*NGOs can bring health care to rural areas*





use local talent is not available, or not good enough, but rather because of the lack of opportunity of village-based people to develop a wider outlook and skill base. True, they would know the local environment even better, but unlike their outside friends, they face much stronger pressure to conform to the wishes of the local elite.

Another serious constraint to the functioning of NGOs comes from the nature of their link-ups with domestic and foreign funding agencies. We just have to face the fact that the target groups that most NGOs work with — the poor, oppressed, and marginalized — are involved in a daily struggle for existence. They rarely have enough for themselves much less for the activists. The villagers have little time to participate in social activities initiated by the NGOs — even if they are related to areas

crucial to their existence (e.g., health, education, nutrition, child care). Most rural areas, at least in India, do not possess the social surplus to finance new activities. The NGOs have thus necessarily to look for external sources of finance.

Funding bodies, however, have their own requirements and more often than not impose their views on the NGOs, and these may not necessarily be in the best interests of the local communities that the NGOs want to serve. In brief, the dissonance between funding agency requirements and the local needs is often resolved in favour of the funding agency — making a large number of NGO programmes irrelevant.

Foreign funds pose even more serious problems. For one thing, they create an impression that the agency is in the

employ of a foreign power — an accusation that cannot be lightly dismissed. But the greatest problem is the lack of understanding of most foreign funding agencies about the countries to which their funds are channelled, and they inflict this lack of understanding on the NGOs. They offer more pecuniary resources as well as other perquisites to the NGO part of their umbrella, which creates an unfortunate impression that all NGOs lead a luxurious life — an image not likely to elicit much sympathy.

The most serious problem has come with the changing nature of the activity spectrum of many NGOs. As long as most NGOs were involved in relief or charitable activities, or even in technical aspects of development, they could fit into national plans and programmes. They provided the much-needed manpower and resources at times of severe calamities and crises — floods, famines and earthquakes. They participated in extension programmes of community development, popularized new agricultural technologies, etc., and rarely gave cause for concern. But development is not a politically neutral task. Slowly, as the realization seeped in that rural areas and villages are not homogeneous entities, and that helping the poor would involve serious conflicts with the local elite and vested interests, the focus of many NGOs shifted toward strategies of community organization. This inevitably heightened social tension at project sites.

Given the small size and weak social base of most of these attempts, NGOs often fall prey to local sectional and parochial interests, combining their strengths with factions of political parties. This is not always to the good of the community whose interests the NGOs want to serve. Militant mobilization, while necessary, has to be combined with a temperance that understands the patron-client relationships that for the poor are part of their strategy for survival. Forcing a rapid pace of change can often lead to fratricidal conflicts that can reverse the work done earlier. This is not to argue for class-

*The focus of many NGOs has shifted toward community organization*





Governments and officials see NGOs as both useful and threatening, with strong local and external ties

neutral and consensus strategies for development, but rather that the organizational work must keep some relationship to the social environment.

Once the NGOs get involved in social mobilization and organization, they have to face all the pressures that such groups confront. Their lack of strength, their foreign link-ups, etc., can be used with great advantage against them, and they have been, often irreparably damaging the NGO movement. Governments are hardly likely to view with sympathy attempts that tend to erode the social legitimacy of official programmes. NGOs often go overboard in their criticism, forgetting that national governments too have their own constraints.

All these tensions are, in a way, inevitable, and intrinsic to the social existence of most NGOs. Where do they leave them vis-à-vis governments? This depends primarily upon the nature of both the governments in question and the dominant section of the NGOs. The relationships among governments, bureaucracies and NGOs are complex, variable in time and space, and multi-level. They are complex in that NGOs cooperate and oppose, link up and promote criticism, complement and provide substitutes for official services, channels, ideologies and norms. Governments and officials in turn often regard NGOs as both useful and threatening, locally rooted yet with strong external ties, capable at techno-economic levels but also engaged in politics. The relations are often excellent at the national level but tense and conflictive at project sites. In fact, one of the reasons why officials at the local level often dislike NGOs is that their strong links at the national level reduce the

local bureaucrat's ability to interface with them. Finally, relationships are variable in accordance with shifts in the nature and policies of national and state governments. (4)

Does this imply that the relations between NGOs and their governments is bound to be one of tension and conflict? Not necessarily. While it is almost impossible to design an overarching policy to determine and regulate these relations, NGOs and governments will have to learn to appreciate the complexity of each other's domain. Only then will it be possible for both of them to work together.

**Some recent experiences.** It might be useful at this stage to discuss briefly some experiences that might help in understanding this relationship. There are numerous examples of successful cooperation in the country that we can learn from. The Community Development effort of the 1950s was based on the Etawah experiment as well as on the pioneering work done by Saheb Sahasrabudhe in Koraput District in Orissa. The Comprehensive Area Development Programme in the State of West Bengal was developed under the aegis of the Tagore Relief Society. The new thinking relating to the rehabilitation of the orthopaedically disabled has been strongly influenced by the work done by the Mahavir Relief Society at the S.M.S. Hospital at Jaipur, Rajasthan. The Comprehensive Rural Health Care Project at Jamkhed has left its mark on the national design for the delivery of health services in rural areas. Across the border, in Bangladesh, the latest drug policy, which places drastic curbs on the operation of multinational drug companies, was spearheaded by the Gonashyatha Kendra. There are more such examples, though still few and far between.

Of particular note are two attempts, one at the national level and the other at a state level, that critically depend on the NGOs. The first relates to the National Adult Education Programme initiated by the Government of India in 1978. This programme was designed in collaboration with the leading agencies, both governmental and otherwise,

in the field of literacy and social education. Leading activities of some agencies were inducted onto the national board. The programme was extremely flexible, incorporating as it did activities ranging from teaching simple, functional literacy, to organization of the rural poor. The entire programme was funded by the central Government, and a large number of NGOs, including many critical of the Government, were given assistance. It was this wide-based interpretation of education and a liberal attitude toward the NGOs that made for the success of the programme.(5)

More daring is the recent attempt of the Government of Rajasthan, under the "Lok Jumbish" (People's Awareness) Programme, to have NGO representatives meet government officials every month to review the progress of a whole series of social development programmes. The NGOs are expected to contribute constructive criticism and, in fact, to have more or less vetoing powers relating to these programmes in their own areas of operation.

Neither programme has enjoyed smooth sailing. The "Lok Jumbish" programme was seen as an attempt to subvert the authority of the local officials. The politicians were not happy to see their role come under criticism. What is important, however, is that the NGOs, in both programmes, were given a role and status rarely permitted in the past.

These efforts are still too scattered and all too few for us to take an optimistic view about the official acceptance and promotion of popular participation in development and decision making, without which no dent can be made on the grinding poverty affecting our countries. Nevertheless, they do suggest a pattern that augurs well for the future.

(1) Mario Padron, *NGOs and Grassroots Development: Limits and Possibilities* (ISS, The Hague, 1982).

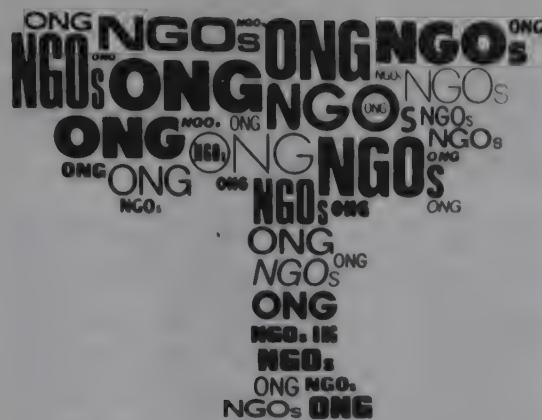
(2) For a recent comprehensive analysis, see Francine Frankel, *India's Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ, 1978).

(3) Sanjit Roy, "NGOs - Changing Role" Seminar, Issue No. 273 (New Delhi, May, 1982).

(4) Padron, op. cit.

(5) Anil Bordia, *Planning and Administration of National Literacy Programmes: The Indian Experience* (International Institute for Educational Planning, Unesco, Paris, 1982).





Don't help me, pal," say the peasants of my country to a friend who offers them a remedy worse than the illness that they want to cure. The aim of this article is to find some ways of determining when external aid for development contributes to the development of local groups and when it is an obstacle, or "dis-aid," such as those cases examined in a seminar on the theme held in Río de Janeiro.(1)

The present system frequently generates dependence: of the nongovernmental organizations on financing agencies, of the peasants on NGOs, and of the farmers who do not benefit on the ones who do. Moreover, the present system contributes to the isolation of those groups who do receive aid, differentiating them from those who do not and thus making the formation of any broader social movement more difficult. We will try in this article to offer some guidelines by which NGOs might counteract these negative influences, increase their degrees of autonomy, and raise the levels of integration among themselves as well as in the local groups.

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**Who are the subjects of aid?** The spontaneous reply to this question is no doubt: the poor of the Third World. Aid will permit them to improve their living conditions and make themselves into the builders of their own destiny. However, most aid projects not only fail to achieve this objective but, what is worse, deepen the situation of dependence in which the peasants and involved NGOs find themselves and isolate them from the rest of the social forces that could enable them to push for change in the country.

From a historical point of view, aid endeavours to transfer values, rules of conduct, technology, forms of social organization, etc., from *outside* the poor groups. It is supposed that this way they can overcome the internal obstacle of their own popular groups who oppose integration into modern

society. First the churches and later the foreign aid agencies worked directly in the communities to produce change. However, the difficulties of communication were so broad and profound that they began to push for the creation of internal mechanisms capable of taking responsibility for promoting the process of modernization.

This push has produced a large enough number of NGOs. In Chile the number has risen to more than 100, and in Brazil there are many more. More than 600 have become affiliated with the Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development. Most of them would not exist without international support, and for many the level of dependence upon financing agencies is also high. Still, their position as "interpreters" of local aspirations often permits them to elaborate projects that only they can manage, establishing an additional focus for dependence of the farmers. (2)

Jan Pronk, ex-Minister of Cooperation for the Development of Holland, has said that aid is not neutral nor is it without pressures, which are exerted by granting or restricting aid.(3) Other more recent works make a point of demystifying the altruism that supposedly exists within this process and try

## The right kind of support

Some  
cautionary advice  
for NGOs in the  
South

by Francisco Vío Grossi



NGOs have begun to question the conventional models of development — they see it as a process to be initiated from within the popular groups

to uncover new, insidious forms of domination, and at the same time to point out that the process of modernization ends up impoverishing even more the urban and the rural poor. (4) In Chile, for example, the policy of *laissez-faire* has impoverished the peasants, expelling them to marginal land and converting them into cheap, seasonal labour for the agriculture of exportation. (5)

The NGOs, through their regular contact with the rural reality, have begun to question the conventional models of development. Each time, they perceive this development more as a process to be initiated from *within* the popular groups and to seek the natural power sources of man and community. The emphasis is placed on concepts of participation, self-reliance and social justice, and in the force of a self-sustained process within the local group itself. The struggle against dependence in all its forms (economic, social, cultural and political) starts with becoming conscious of the real causes of poverty, which are encountered in the same structure of domination. Development projects must promote actions, perhaps less spectacular, but more efficient because they seek their enrichment in the perceptions and aspirations of the peasants.

This option frequently places the NGOs between two tensions: the community for whom the project is intended and the financing agency before whom the project appears before it exists. Thus it is imagined and structured within the bureaucratic requirements of the agencies where it is altered according to certain thematic "modes." In their turn, functionaries of the aid agencies are caught between similar tensions, but

on another level, that is, between the demands of the NGOs and those of their superiors and of the donors in the rich countries, who want more altruism and less conscientiousness.

The attempts to overcome dependence in order to change the peasants into true subjects of the projects are made by means of "translations" or "decodifications" of projects on different levels of the chain of aid. NGOs try to accommodate these attempts in order to serve their real objectives, and the peasants, for their part, take those aspects of the aid that they see as useful for their lives and reject, in various manners, those aspects that do not interest them.

Waldo César succeeded in making an interesting comparison between two Brazilian projects, one with a great deal of aid (Gurupi) and another with almost none (Damasio). He observed that in Gurupi, not only were the foreseen objectives not achieved, but the excess of aid created new forms of domination within the community and isolated it from the rest of the peasants in the region. In nearby Damasio, however, the project originated in a petition from the community itself and was based on the utilization of the human and material resources of the place. What resulted was a major community integration and improvement of the conditions of life. (6)

It would appear that in order effectively to transform the peasants into subjects of aid projects the bureaucratic structure of the majority of financing agencies must be altered. Though this appears somewhat difficult at first sight, it is also urgent that some ideas be immediately proposed — ideas that have arisen in the practice of some Latin American NGOs and which may contribute to diminishing the dependence and isolation generated by a certain type of aid. These ideas refer to relocation problems with the origin of projects, their resources, the evaluation and other forms of autonomy and integration at the local level.

**Origin of projects.** The ideal situation, as we know, is that projects spring from a local base (spontaneous projects);

those that fail frequently lack the essential direct relation between base groups and the financing agencies. It is desirable that the NGOs avoid the temptation to conceive projects that depend on a mere continual transfer of resources to the benefit groups. They must make an effort to conceive projects starting from the discovery of existing necessities at the local level, including their solutions, rooting all action in the forms of community that exist in the locality. Formality and impatience can limit and destroy forever the creativity and spontaneity of the local groups.

The projects should define for themselves at the start how the *projects-processes* are to be fitted into a social reality in constant flux. The project must be conceived as a complement to the regular forces for local improvement before being considered a substitute. Wherever possible it is necessary to avoid establishing inflexible conditions. In order to produce this encounter between local necessities and complementary support, a period of observation and contacts on the local level is required, so that it is appropriate to seek resources for financing seed-projects or experimentation. This initial period is vital for the future development of the project.

The theme of resources is related as much to their worth as to their control. One must avoid thinking, "the more resources, the better." The rich projects for poor families limit the development of the capacities of the popular groups themselves. The abundance of money leads to the necessity to spend it, inhibiting the creativity, solidarity and cooperation within the community. The financing, on the other hand, must plan the resources to satisfy opportunely the small, spontaneous incentives that arise from the dynamics of the project. They must consider themselves the institutional resources of the NGO for alleviating the pressures, uncertainty, insecurity and dependence that generate a permanent, and often desperate, need for funds in order to survive.

The assignment of funds in the chain of aid must be as close as possible to the



al base. The financing agencies must be open principally to those in the country who know the project; to those at the center of the NGOs, to those who work on the terrain and in the local base, to the peasants. In this sense, it is interesting that some agencies have created rotating funds for small projects, directed jointly by NGOs and peasants. In this way, they insure the opportunity for distribution of resources and decentralization of aid. The external agency usually enhances accounting controls and participates in the evaluation of the experience.

**Autonomy.** In order to promote autonomy and diminish dependence there exists a central principle: wherever possible, the work of peasants and mediators must not depend on the project, but, on the contrary, the development of the project must depend on the work of the peasants and mediators. The viability of the project, that is to say its continuation, must depend on forces that work on a local level before depending on external resources.

An excessive presence of foreigners could be avoided as much for the reversals and losses of time carried by the "tourism" of aid as for the fact that the discussions and commentaries arising between them and the mediators tend to evoke uncertainty and insecurity in the local base. However, these contacts must not be avoided, because they serve as much to "educate" the agency about the problems of the project as to enable the peasants to know more about the mechanisms of aid. Finally, it is desirable to decrease dependence by diversifying the sources of financing.

**Integration.** In order to combat the isolation generated by the dependence on sources of financing, it is necessary to push for integration at all levels. Between the peasants, trips for the interchange of experiences or reciprocal visits can be promoted. In the Farm Technology Project and GIA Organization in Chile these types of activities have created new impulses at local and regional levels for promoting bold forms of social organization. Then, through NGOs, integration is able to push across

periodic encounters and the formation of more stable regional and national organizations. The Latin American Association of Promotion Organizations (ALOP) is a serious attempt to raise the level of interchange of experiences and to improve the authority of negotiation vis-à-vis the aid agencies. These agencies must integrate themselves by way of, for example, their participation in such gatherings as the Latin American Conference on Strategies for Development organized by the Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development, held in Santiago last April.

**Evaluation.** On the evaluation depends the continuation of the project and its ability to establish itself, and in this regard it is an important instrument of

*Projects must fit  
into a continuing social  
reality*



dependence or of autonomy. The key element of the whole evaluation is the definition itself — what is understood to constitute success or failure. The evaluation must be permitted to define the aid in conformity with objectives periodically fixed by the groups who work at the local level and by the criteria on which they jointly decide to judge the project. They must reduce the importance hitherto given the merely quantitative aspects, because one tries to produce not only good material results but also the processes of collective autonomy. This demands incorporating the subjective points of view of the peasants themselves into the evaluation.

One practice common in Latin America is established gatherings of peasants, mediators and representatives of financing agencies for the purpose of analyzing the results of what they have done. This analysis must not remain circumscribed only at the local level but must be marked within the global context in which these projects exist. Often activities in small localities exert influence on the country and vice versa. On other occasions, they are radically important in experimentation with innovative propositions, such as those called presage-projects, and must be evaluated as such.

These guidelines can help in avoiding, to some extent, the use of the present aid system as dis-aid and instead of generating dependence and isolation, to press for autonomy and integration of local groups, the NGOs and the aid agencies.

(1) *I Seminar on Aid — Ajuda Externa e Desenvolvimento — Um debate sobre a ajuda a projetos sociais — CEMPLA/ CEDEC, Rio de Janeiro, 1977 (mimeo).*

(2) *C.A. de Medina, Ajuda externa e "perdidos de ajuda" isolados (CERIS, Rio de Janeiro, 1971).*

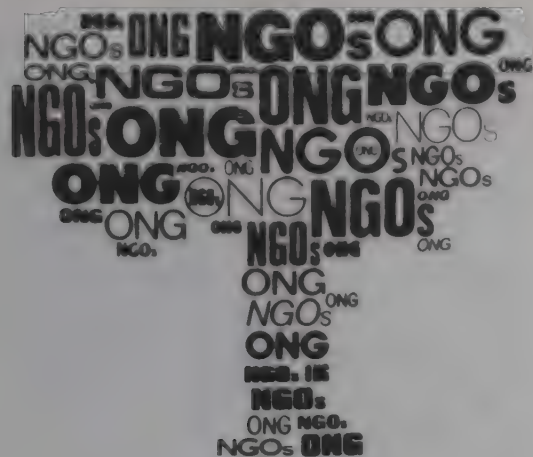
(3) *The Ecumenical Review, Vol. XXVII No. 1, Jan. 1975, pp.18-19.*

(4) *Notably Robert Carty and Virginia Smith, Perpetuating Poverty: The Political Economy of Canadian Foreign Aid (Between the Lines, Toronto, 1981); Jorgen Lissner, The Politics of Altruism: A Study of the Political Behaviour of Voluntary Development Agencies (Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, 1977).*

(5) *J. Crispi, J. Bengoa, M.E. Cruz and C. Leiva, Capitalismo y Campesinado en Chile (GIA, Chile, 1980).*

(6) *Hacia una nueva política de ayuda — Un estudio de caso (CEMLA, Rio de Janeiro, 1974 (mimeo).*





The nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with development and international solidarity have, over the past twenty years, acquired full rights in the world of cooperation. Effective on the development front in the countries of the South, the militants and leaders of these associations are profoundly changing the attitudes of the societies of the North. Their ideas are penetrating political parties, trade unions and associations to which members of NGOs belong, and are spreading to the professional classes. But the NGOs do not intend to stop there. While they are aware of their limited means, they would like to play the role of stimulus and sometimes harbinger in the field of development problems with governments and intergovernmental systems.

The NGOs want the people's voice to

Conference mentioned them very briefly and just for the record. This is because, working as they do at grass-root level with the popular movements, the NGOs, whether from the North or the South, are automatically a source of anxiety for governments concerned above all with maintaining their own authority.

**Three sectors.** NGOs are active in the Third World in three principal sectors: rural life (agriculture, particularly subsistence crops, and food), education (children and adults), and health (prevention, education, medical care). Thus in the Sahelian region of Upper Volta, during the 1972-73 drought, the peasants, with the help of a national development association, were able to build up a reserve stock of millet for household consumption and resowing. With financial assistance from

# The northern partners

NGOs from industrialized countries can play a unique role as intermediaries in Third World development

by Menotti Bottazzi



*Development does not come from outside*

be heard, as well as that of their governments. This desire was again expressed in no uncertain terms at the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) held in Paris in September 1981. Together with their partners from the South, many Northern NGOs took part in the Conference, and organized debates, meetings, press conferences, exhibitions, etc., so that the real problems of the poor could be better understood. But the Paris Conference also showed, side by side with these efforts and this very substantial attendance, the difficulties encountered by the NGOs in achieving recognition of their work. The Comprehensive Programme of Action established by the

a French NGO, they constructed small closed sheds, or cereal banks, in their villages. They stored their reserves there, and thus escaped the clutches of usurers who bought up the harvest at a ridiculously low price and sold it back to them at an exorbitantly high one when the lean period came.

In Brazil the large landowners, often foreigners, practise extensive stock-raising over vast stretches of territory. The small peasants, who have no title to ownership apart from that recognized by custom, are driven out, often forcibly. The Brazilian Episcopal Conference set up in 1975, with a little external assistance, a Pastoral Land Commission to "support the peasants in their struggle, defend their rights and find a

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...ution to their problems, in collaboration with the peasants themselves."

The small fishermen of the island of Samar in the Philippines found their catches getting poorer and poorer every day, since their fishing grounds were being overexploited by Japanese trawlers. So, with the help of the local church and a few European NGOs, they formed an association of several thousand families to protect and train the fishermen. This association helped them to become owners of their own equipment, and to market their catches. There are hundreds of other examples of NGO activities in every continent in the fields of food self-sufficiency, basic medical care, and training.

Although careful not to spread the aid received too thin but to ensure that it fits into each country's development



Plan where such a plan exists, NGOs do not support only "good projects." Their aim rather is to make the people of the Third World aware, through projects, that their future is in their own hands. The main idea is to have faith in people's capacity to develop themselves. Development does not come from outside; it is simply the mobilization of the natural and human resources of each country. Material improvements are necessary, but they will come to nothing if they are not adopted and carried out by everyone for one another's benefit. Take, for example, a well in the Sahel: it provides water for human beings and cattle to drink and for irrigation. But there will have to be thousands of wells (and other facilities) before life becomes any better. But digging a well implies community discussion of its usefulness, its construction, maintenance and financing. And this

may lead to consideration of other problems; the decision to build a well could spark off new enthusiasm in the village. Hunger and poverty will be conquered by the people themselves in their own environment. The fact that each citizen has this responsibility does not, of course, free the government from its responsibility: it must build schools and medical centres, roads and bridges, and all the infrastructures necessary for community life. But it is only when the people, the impoverished rural masses and the outcasts in the shantytowns, become aware of their situation and struggle to achieve development, that the latter begins to take shape.

**Intermediary role.** In this context, NGOs of the South have a unique role. What would be the good of any development that does not spring from the people's own energy, from popular movements? But the NGOs of the North come in as reinforcements. This collaboration makes it possible to plan and implement development aid for Third World communities without imposing a foreign model on them. Financial support is only one manifestation of solidarity. In Latin America, for example, the support of foreign NGOs encourages the emergence and vitality of popular movement, rare opportunities for self-expression and factors of cultural dynamism. NGOs work toward an integrated development: they try to reach all essential sectors in community life, neither favouring nor ignoring any one in particular. How can technical improvements in the field of agriculture have any real effect, if education is for the privileged few and completely cut off from real life? Similarly, in socialist countries of the Third World, the NGOs support popular groups who want to become still more responsible for their own lives and their future, without depending so much on the State or the Party as regards economic, social, cultural or religious matters.

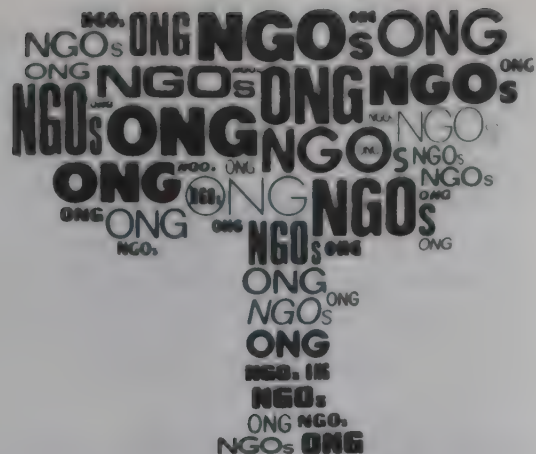
If they are to take charge of their own affairs, groups should have the opportunity to organize themselves, to form all the "intermediary bodies" - trade

unions, political parties, various associations - necessary to animate and dynamize the life of a people. This is another role for the NGOs of the North: to support groups of peasants, intellectuals, cadres. Some of the crises in African countries occur because governments and citizens confront each other without any intermediary bodies at all.

**North-South interdependence.** Thanks to the NGOs, the voice of the people can be heard even in international conferences. A global development policy will never be established without far-reaching changes in international relations, and in producer and consumer structures on the countries of the North. In this field too, the NGOs have a modest but effective role to play in stimulating both international organizations and governments.

Despite the economic crisis, solving the problem of terms of trade is urgent, with a fairer price for raw materials, through such complicated but necessary mechanisms as a joint fund or a stabilization fund. Also, cash crops should no longer be given priority, and the peasants should be paid a fair price for their food crops. This will encourage them to remain in the rural areas to feed their families and, with their surpluses, the town dwellers as well. These reforms are closely linked to those of the monetary system and financial organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, the developing countries will need financial aid for a long time to come. The NGOs will have to spur on the countries of the North to devote 0.7 percent of their GNP to development, and to set aside 0.15 percent of this 0.7 percent for the LDCs. This target would obviously be easier to reach if military expenditure did not amount to such enormous sums, whereas money earmarked for aid and solidarity is little more than \$30 billion. If the NGOs of the South have a difficult role to play with their governments, the NGOs of the North have an essential task in attempting to change ways of thinking and thus encourage structural modifications in our societies. In this area as well, NGOs of both South and North are closely interdependent.





# Whose felt needs?

Helping communities to identify and discuss their problems is a crucial NGO activity

*by Khor Kok Peng*

Many social scientists and economists have serious doubts as to whether the present model of development is really beneficial to the poor. All too often, "development projects" are selected by governments to introduce symbols of ultra-modernism (superhighways, 60-storey skyscrapers, multimillion-dollar dams) that have little meaning to the rural poor. Even more alarming, millions of farmers and food producers are being

pushed aside, marginalized and displaced for the sake of "development." In Brazil's Amazon jungle, hundreds of thousands of native people are being forced out of their homelands as forests are logged. Hundreds of traditional fishing communities in South and Southeast Asia are suffering from dwindling incomes as high-powered trawler boats scoop up the best part of the catch. Grazing land and food producing farms





being demolished on a large scale to make way for dams, factory zones, western-style suburban housing estates and road construction.

Historically, the poor are thus often made victims rather than beneficiaries of development. To add insult to injury,

"simple" problems  
villagers face include irregular  
public transportation...



they are usually told that there are "inevitable costs" to be borne in development, and that "everyone has to make a sacrifice." Needless to say, it is not inevitable that the poor be made to "pay" for development, and it is a scandal that their livelihood or homes have to be sacrificed for a development that principally benefits a small elite. But poor communities in general are not sufficiently organized and lack the confidence to voice their plight or represent their problems to the relevant authorities. Too often they suffer in silence.

**The role NGOs can play.** Ideally, poor communities should participate in development programmes that improve their resource base and provide more employment and income. Such basic amenities as housing, sanitation, clean water, garbage disposal, health services and education should be made available to these communities. But just as important, perhaps more, they should not be displaced and made even poorer through development projects.

In this context, nongovernmental organizations have a crucial role to play in protecting and enhancing the interests of poor communities. Not subject to bureaucratic controls, as are government agencies, NGOs can help the poor to express their needs and views and mobilizing them to make their demands in the larger political, planning and economic arena.

NGOs can:

- Help the community identify and discuss its problems. Very often the first impediment to action by the poor is their inability to recognize their problems as legitimate issues.
- Give the community confidence that these problems can be resolved if its members are prepared to organize themselves and have the will to act.
- Provide a link between the community and relevant government authorities; lawyers, scientists and academics; the mass media; and other communities and groups. The intellectuals and profes-

sionals may give much-needed help; the media can publicize the issue and thus involve the public at large. This will give a push (especially to the authorities) to resolve the problem.

The following could be done along with the above:

- A check should be made of a community's basic amenities and needs. Does it have proper water, sanitation, garbage collection, lighting and public transport facilities? Discussions should be held with families to determine their most serious unfulfilled basic needs.

- If the community is facing displacement of its livelihood, a thorough study should be made of the causes and the legal aspects. Find out to which government authorities (state or federal government, district office, land office, health department, water department, environment agency?) the villages can make representations.

- The community should be encouraged to select an "action committee" responsible for taking up the issue and for mobilizing the community. This committee should be drawn from among active and dynamic villagers with a strong desire to resolve the problems. It need not be led by traditional community elites, although an understanding needs to be established between the "action committee" and the traditional leaders. The NGO should work closely with this group, not do the actual work itself.

- The NGO can help the action committee draft petitions and letters, which should be adopted and signed by all members of the community. These should be sent to the authorities or the parties concerned, and to the press.

- The NGO could organize a visit to the community for the press and for interested individuals (lawyers, students), so that the issue can be made public.

- Sympathetic professionals should be asked to help (e.g., lawyers, doctors, scientists, economists)

- The action committee should prepare itself to meet with government officials and other parties (e.g., directors of companies polluting their river) and to make appropriate demands at the meetings.

- All families in the community should be kept informed of developments and should actively participate in decision making through regular meetings chair-

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The actual processes of decision making, mobilization and representation are carried out by the community

ed by the action committee.

During the implementation of the above measures, an NGO should act as a catalyst, setting in motion a progress by which the community chooses its own trusted leaders, mobilizes itself and represents its problems to the authorities and the public. The actual processes of decision making, mobilization and representation are carried out by the community. The NGO must work with and not for the community, otherwise the action will not succeed.

**The experience of CAP.** The Consumers' Association of Penang is an NGO in Malaysia that takes up development issues from a broad consumer perspective. Besides protecting consumers from business malpractice, it is involved in issues concerning basic needs, rational use of resources, environmental pollution, culture and lifestyles. Its activities include research, publications, educational programmes, media work and helping poor communities to voice their problems.

In its work with communities, CAP is involved in two main types of issues: first, basic needs and amenities, and second, environmental problems and the disruption of livelihood.

**Basic needs and amenities.** In the area of basic needs and amenities, CAP staff members conduct a "house counselling" educational programme in villages and estates during which basic principles of nutrition, health, budgeting, credit and other topics are discussed with the families, usually the woman of the house. At such sessions, the villagers also bring up pressing problems that they face. Very often these are "simple" problems, such as the irregularity of the village bus service or the high prices charged at the

only shop in the village. These complaints are discussed with villagers in a group, and then the CAP staff helps the community to act on the problem by, for example, writing to the bus company concerned (with a copy to the municipal authorities, the Road and Transport Department and the press) or by getting the villagers to have a heart-to-heart talk with the shop owner. These actions are sometimes successful, but they usually require a prolonged period of continuous pressure on the part of the villagers. What is important is that the community begins to recognize its common problems, to take action to overcome them, and thus to educate itself in justly demanding its rights.

Recently many rural communities in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia complained to CAP staff that the nightsoil was left uncollected for several days in their villages. In the rainy season, the waste material overflowed the bins and polluted house compounds, threatening the health of thousands of people. The problem was prevalent in villages still using the "bucket toilet" system, where waste is collected in buckets placed under the toilet. Contractors are hired by the municipal authorities to collect the nightsoil, but the services provided are often inadequate and irregular, collection taking place once every week or ten days. Four villages with a combined population of 3 000 complained that 64 small children were found suffering from jaundice from the health hazards posed by overflowing waste.

CAP staff paid several visits to the communities to investigate the problem, and helped the villagers to organize themselves. Petition letters signed by hundreds of residents were handed to the municipal authorities. Journalists who visited the affected areas publicized the problem in the newspapers. Eventually, the municipal authorities improved their services, though not yet to the villagers' full satisfaction. What is important, however, is that these poor communities now have the confidence and experience to stand up for their rights. If the waste disposal system should again deteriorate, or other basic problems arise, they will now act to

rectify the situation and not merely grumble or meekly accept their fate.

Another important amenity often taken for granted by urban dwellers is the telephone. In rural areas where the transportation network is poorly developed, a public telephone booth becomes an indispensable means of communication, especially in emergencies when the fire brigade, police or ambulance are required. In many villages CAP staff found that public telephones were one of the most acutely felt needs of the poor. Yet many areas are still deprived of this simple facility. As a result, CAP has helped several communities to draft letters and petitions to the Telecoms Department requesting the installation of a phone booth in their village. In half the villages, the authorities finally acceded to the request after several reminders and even more



months. In the unsuccessful villages, more letters and reminders are being persistently sent. Last year, CAP also sent a memorandum to the federal government asking for more emphasis and funds to be allocated for public telephones in poor communities, which have been hitherto neglected despite billions of dollars spent on sophisticated telecommunications facilities. The villages that CAP had helped were cited as



amples of the importance of the telephone at grass-roots level. In this way, CAP is able not only to help individual communities but to bring the common problems of these communities into national focus for the attention of the authorities.

**Environmental problems and dislocation of community's livelihood.** An even more serious type of problem in rural communities concerns environmental issues and the dislocation of sources of livelihood. These problems are revealed by CAP staff during visits to villages or, increasingly, through letters written by the community to CAP. Most of the affected communities are fishing villages or food-producing farms. In Malaysia, as in other Southeast Asian countries, hundreds of traditional fishing communities are threatened by marine pollution and invasion of their

cent between 1977 and 1981, while the acreage for 11 types of popular fruit dropped by nine percent between 1976 and 1980. The farmers may be tenants or squatters, and clearing them out can be done under the law. If they are owners of the land, the government can acquire their property and pay compensation, which is a poor substitute for income-generating farmland.

During the initial contact made with the community, CAP staff make a survey of the situation with the villagers. Facts about the social, economic and environmental aspects of the problem are collected and analyzed. Discussions are held with some villagers, usually those who had been active enough to bring the problem to CAP's attention.

*... and  
uncollected  
refuse*



territorial waters by trawler boats. In Penang state alone, the marketable fish catch dropped by 60 percent between 1966 and 1980, according to the Ministry of Agriculture. At the same time, vegetable and fruit farms have been asked to make way for government development projects or private-sector activity (such as house construction). In the state of Penang, the acreage of cultivated vegetables fell by eight per-

cent between 1977 and 1981, while the acreage for 11 types of popular fruit dropped by nine percent between 1976 and 1980. The farmers may be tenants or squatters, and clearing them out can be done under the law. If they are owners of the land, the government can acquire their property and pay compensation, which is a poor substitute for income-generating farmland.

During the discussions, natural leaders emerge who may sometimes be different from the traditional village leadership. Usually, the younger people in the community are more eager to take up the problem, and they emerge as the active elements. In some cases, they may form an action committee responsible for mobilizing the community; in other cases, these informal leaders work through the already established village leader-

ship structure. In either case, the traditional leaders have to become involved, at least in giving their approval, so that a unity of action can be achieved. NGOs have to be very sensitive to this interplay of village relationships.

A period of intense discussion within the community will follow, with decisions taken to send letters or petitions to government departments and ministries concerned with the issue, to the private companies concerned (if the problem is caused by them), to the press and other groups that might help. A response is then awaited. Newspapers may publicize the community's statement or send reporters to do in-depth feature articles. Government officials may visit the community to conduct their own investigations or meet the villagers. The community's leaders make certain requests or demands (stop the pollution, or relocate the road project elsewhere, or raise the compensation level) and negotiations are carried out. The process is usually long, stretching to several months or years. Seldom is there complete success from the community's point of view; often there is partial success; sometimes, only a frustration of hopes. However, the community builds up a capacity for representing its interests to the Government and the public. The depressed villages become revitalized with the optimism that comes from positive action to solve one's own problems. At the level of national planning, the voices of the poor communities, the "victims of development," are heard.

**Case histories.** The following are some communities facing problems of livelihood with which CAP has been working recently:

The riverine fishing village of Kuala Juru had its livelihood almost destroyed when factories in a nearby Free Trade Zone discharged poisonous effluents into the river, killing off fish life. CAP helped the villagers to publicize their problems and represent them to the authorities. The village youth collected water samples from the polluted river, and these were analyzed by university-based scientists who volunteered their services. The tests confirmed a high lev-



NGOs have an important role in helping to articulate the felt needs and grievances of grass-roots communities

el of pollution. The fishermen formed an action committee which met the state's Chief Minister and a number of Federal Ministers. The effluents were then diverted away from the river to the sea directly, but they still pose a potential threat to the new cockle (shellfish) seabed farms now cultivated by a cooperative set up by the villagers. The new cockle project is economically very successful. The success of the village has been largely due to able and dynamic leadership in the action committee which eventually also managed the cockle project. CAP's role was advisory and catalytic.

Kuala Kedah is a rice-growing village whose crops were destroyed by effluent discharge from a chemical factory into the village stream. CAP helped the farmers take up the case to the state authorities, the factory and the environment department. After initial resistance, the factory paid compensation to the affected villages, but the method of payment and the small sum did not satisfy the farmers. Occasionally the pollution still threatens the crops.

Famous for its fruits and spices, the village of Balik Pulau underwent a traumatic experience when a road was built through the nearby hills. Rocks blasted during the construction were dumped indiscriminately down the hill slopes, destroying dozens of acres of prime fruit and rubber trees. As a result of the uprooting of the trees, the land and rivers also silted up. A few young farmers contacted CAP and then organized a joint petition sent to various government authorities, including the police. Journalists visiting the site gave prominence to the farmers' plight in the newspapers. A meeting was then held between the farmers' representatives, the

State Public Works Department chief and the Managing Director of the private road-building company. Eventually the dumping of rocks was stopped and the company paid the farmers compensation for their losses. This was however only a partial success, because the compensation was inadequate and could not replace the loss of future earnings caused by destruction of their land.

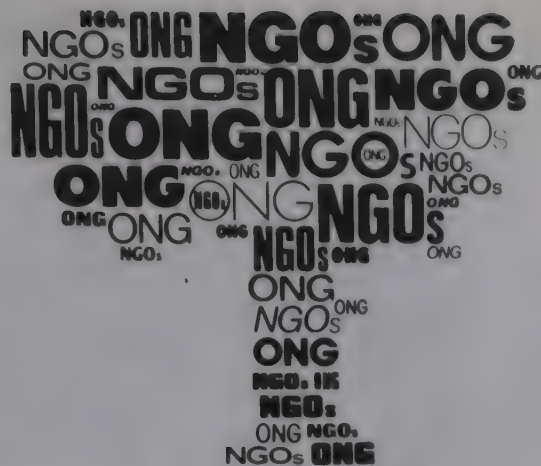
Bagan Lallang, a vegetable-farming and poultry-keeping village, was flooded under two feet of water for two months when a housing developer blocked the flow of the village stream. Because of the flood, crops and livestock were destroyed and houses were damaged. CAP staff aided the villagers to draft letters and petitions, and several meetings were held between the village leaders, the municipal authorities and the housing developer. Students from the consumer club of a nearby secondary school conducted a house-to-house survey of losses incurred by the flood. Eventually the developer agreed to dig a new drainage canal through the village and to pay compensation to the villagers based on the students' survey. The Penang east coast foreshore area (facing the seafront) houses several thousand fishermen, petty traders and shipyard workers who depend on the sea for a living. Their livelihood is threatened by a plan to construct an offshore highway that will close down several small shipyards and block the fishermen's access to the sea. The residents contacted CAP, which helped them carry out a survey of the socio-economic impact of the highway. This was used as the basis of a petition signed by 3 000 residents appealing against the highway. Recently the Government announced that the project has been shelved, probably due to lack of funds caused by the current economic recession. In the event of an economic recovery, the project may be resumed.

The 350-acre Thean Teik Estate is a major vegetable-producing area in Penang. Owned by a private clan association, the land has been rented out to farmers for several decades. In 1981, the 520 households (with 12 000 residents) were asked to vacate the land to

make way for a housing estate project. In 1982 bulldozers were sent in to destroy some of the crops, and violent fights occurred, during one of which a woman resident was shot dead and others injured. The residents' association has been working with CAP in drafting appeal letters. The farmers are asking that a portion of the land be preserved as farmland or that, at the least, the compensation offered by the developer be raised. The state's Chief Minister has now decided to intervene as a mediator between the farmers, the landowners and the developers.

**Some conclusions.** The experience of CAP shows that NGOs do have and can play an important constructive role in helping to articulate the felt needs, grievances and problems of grass-root communities and to channel these to the relevant government authorities and the larger society. In this process, the community is able to make its voice heard and can begin to look after its interests in the context of national economic planning and development. How successful the community is in doing so varies from case to case, depending on such factors as the quality of leadership and degree of cohesion among the villagers, the extent of sympathy in public opinion, and the response of the state authorities or private companies involved. As stressed earlier, the role of the NGO in this process is that of a catalyst, a facilitator and a help, not as the main agent of action which is the community itself. An NGO possesses certain skills, such as the ability to conduct surveys, carry out tests and library research, draft letters and statements and conceptually link local-level problems to national issues. It also has the potential to contact and draw in professionals such as lawyers, doctors, scientists, academics, teachers and also government officials to perform various tasks in helping poor communities. What the NGO needs is the dedication, determination and correct methods to perform its role. Experience and effectiveness will then follow. And the role it can play is not only vital but perhaps also indispensable if poor communities are to build up the capacity genuinely to participate in development.



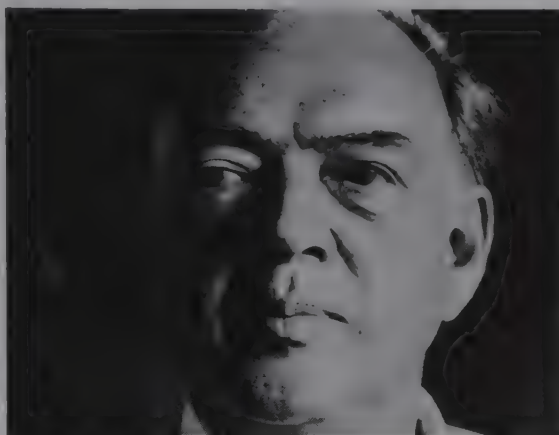


Interview: George McRobie

## "We're not talking about revolution but about changing the rules"

The Intermediate Technology Development Group, London, has been one of the most seminal and successful of NGOs in the development field. When it was founded by E. F. Schumacher, author of *Small is Beautiful*, in 1965, appropriate technology was only an idea: today it is accepted wisdom. ITDG has not only helped to develop working projects and technologies for rural areas in fields ranging from building to transportation, from water supply to food production, processing and storage; it has also been a guiding light of the appropriate technology movement, which now numbers more than 1 000 groups and units, 300 or so of these in developing countries, and most of them nongovernmental organizations too.

Here George McRobie, the ITDG's co-founder, successor to Schumacher as chairman, and author of *Small is Possible*, talks to British development writer Paul Harrison about the state of appropriate technology and its prospects, and the role that NGOs have to play in spreading it.



George McRobie

**?** Harrison: Perhaps we could start by defining our terms. Is there any difference between intermediate technology and the more commonly used term, appropriate technology?

**!** McRobie: Intermediate technology was the original term we used. It meant technology intermediate in the cost of creating a workplace, somewhere between the insignificant cost of the traditional tool and the expensive Western technology: exactly where it would lie would depend on local circumstances and would bear some relation to the average income per caput in the country. Intermediate technology is more clearly defined than "appropriate," because appropriate asks a question: what is

appropriate? Some things have to be big. But for most people in most developing countries, the appropriate technology would be relatively small, simple, capital saving instead of labour saving. It would be nonviolent toward people — that is, it would enable people to do creative work rather than make them simply adjuncts of machines — and nonviolent toward nature, in other words respecting ecological principles, trying to work with nature instead of against it.

**?** Q.: How far has the idea of appropriate technology got?

**!** A.: In the beginning, during the 1960s, we were working distinctly against the development establishment. We weren't welcome in the West, where it was seen as a crackpot idea, and we weren't welcome in the developing countries, which said: This is second rate technology; we don't want anything to do with it. That was stage one, rejection. Then came stage two, in the 1970s, with more and more experiments that worked, and more and more economists writing about it, and a general acceptance of the idea. We are now really at stage three, where many AT groups around the world have proved beyond argument that it is



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possible to make things small and cheap but efficient, that one has to bring small-scale industry to rural areas if they are to be saved from grinding poverty, and that there is no possibility of overcoming the problem of unemployment without a totally new approach to technology. But there's still not much happening by way of widespread application. The fourth stage would be application of the knowledge on a scale that made appropriate technology a normal part of administrative business and community activity.

**?** Q.: Has the fourth stage actually been reached by any country?

**!** A.: In terms of populations involved it has probably got furthest in Sri Lanka through the Sarvodaya movement for village self-reliance. Elsewhere it's still only in pockets. The governments of Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat in India are very interested, as are a number of African governments. Zimbabwe is one of the rare cases that has said its rural development will be built largely on appropriate technology.

**?** Q.: What about NGOs?

**!** A.: There's no doubt the idea has moved furthest here. We had much earlier support from them. With Christian Aid and the Quakers we wouldn't have come into existence. The great majority of aid charities now are either operating with appropriate technology or are near to it than governments or intergovernmental organizations. Within the developing countries, most of the really active AT centres were started up by NGOs or as NGOs, though a few have now been adopted by

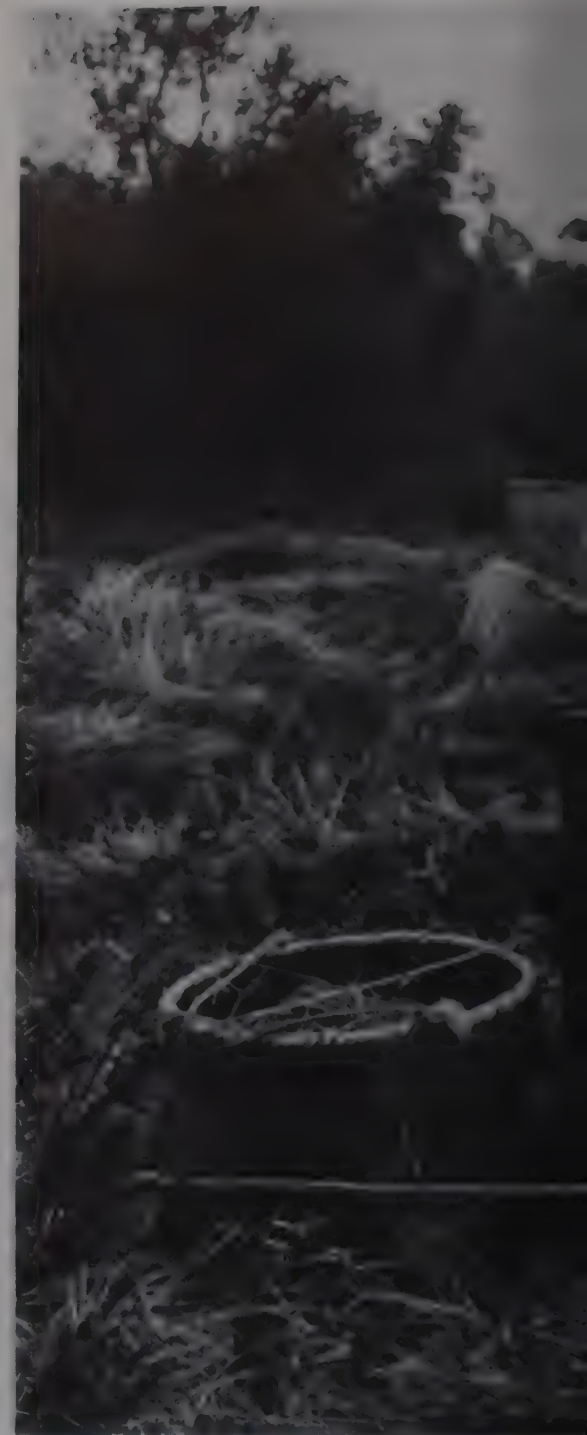
governments. I'm thinking of successful organizations like the Appropriate Technology Development Association in Lucknow, the Technology Consultancy Centre in Ghana. Dian Desa in Indonesia or CEMAT in Guatemala. NGOs don't flourish everywhere — indigenous NGOs barely exist in Africa. They seem to be the product of societies with a substantial middle class and a religious culture that teaches that people have responsibility for each other.

**?** Q.: Do NGOs have a particular contribution to make distinct from governments?

**!** A.: They have a great advantage over governments, because they can be selective, they can go where they get a response. And they can do things quickly. That's important, because a lot of people in developing countries are absolutely sick of failed promises. Small scale NGOs at local and community level also have enormous potential to spread AT. The specialized organizations like ourselves can develop the technology, but we need organizations like farmers' groups or women's groups to get the technology into the hands of the people, and to get feedback on how it works and make local adaptations. Take the small farmers' groups of the Puebla project in Mexico. If you put a piece of new technology into their hands, they'll try it out, pull it apart and put it together again, hold meetings to discuss it — and at the end they'd be able to tell you exactly what's wrong with it and how it needs improving.

**?** Q.: How should small scale and local NGOs like these go about choosing the right appropriate technology for their members' use?

**!** A.: The first step would be for them to identify what their needs and priorities are — for example, they may decide clean water is their priority. Then they need to discuss how it is going to be provided, who will pay for it, who will organize it? For example, do they want a community water supply, or a



*A technological package must suit different local circumstances*

family supply? Then they might need to get in touch with an appropriate technology organization, preferably in their own country, or with an organization like ITDG or Appropriate Technology International in Washington. In the case of water supply and building in particular, there are any number of effective technologies to choose from, and there is bound to be one or more than will fit local needs, in terms of cost, materials and skills required. Then they need to ask: can they do it for themselves? Are there any local craftsmen who could make it? And it's very important to ask: Who will run it? Who will look after it and maintain it after the experts have left?





But if there is no local tradition of community cooperation and control, then this is certainly very difficult to do.

**?** Q.: You say in your book *Small is Possible* that government-run organizations are often incapable of being effective appropriate technology units.

**!** A.: That is generally true. Bureaucracies are so much influenced by the past, because the people at the top of them are often trapped in their own training, which in most developing countries was exclusively Western. Government research organizations have the same problems, because their directors were trained in Western countries twenty or forty years ago, so they are still part of the delivery system of inappropriate technology. It is

only as we get a new generation of scientists coming up with an interest in AT that we'll see any change. Most of the elites still hold to the fallacy that appropriate technology is somehow a second rate technology. But there's nothing second rate about it. You are talking about design and strength of structure of a degree of sophistication that hasn't been seen before. You expect a top-class car in the West to run for 2 000 - 4 000 hours in all, but we are designing windmills that will run for up to 100 000 hours without giving a lot of trouble.

**?** Q.: But surely NGOs can't get very far by themselves? Hasn't AT made most real progress where it is also supported by governments, as in South Asia and East Africa?

**!** A.: Certainly NGOs can't get very far without government backing. All they can do is to operate within the rules of the game, and it is governments that make those rules. Large-scale industry usually gets all the tax holidays, the import licences, the infrastructure built for it. The rules usually favour big against small, centralized against decentralized, rich against poor. Governments need to start changing the rules that apply to the advantage of big versus small. We really now need as a minimum to equalize the assistance given to small scale operations. But preferably one would swing the balance toward small, by making it more difficult to use vast amounts of capital in industry. We're not talking about revolution, but about changing the rules.



India has reserved a whole range of products for the small-scale sector to produce and has made credit much easier to get

**?** Q.: But is it possible to change the rules far enough in capitalist countries, where large industry and multinationals may have close links with top bureaucrats and politicians? Won't vested interests put up strong opposition of the rules are changed to reduce their privileges?

**!** A.: We have had cases where people in big industry did try to oppose AT. But they were half-hearted. We haven't met great opposition — but that may be a function of the fact that the movement is still very small. Even so, our experience is that a number of governments have done fantastic work without great upheavals. Look at what India has done. She has reserved a whole range of products for the small-scale sector to produce, and made credit much easier to get. Nobody has raised great political screams about this. The Indians have demonstrated that you can begin to change the rules of the game within the existing structure. These are steps toward my ideal, everybody's ideal, of nonviolent revolutions. Where you have particular types of structure, as used to be the case in Ethiopia and Iran, where the structure itself was violent toward the people, there is no chance for nonviolent change. But where you've got a relatively open political structure, there are lots of things that can be done within that to make it easier for the poor to help themselves.

**?** Q.: Wouldn't that be easier in the case of socialist governments?

**!** A.: Success is not predicated on that. A government can concen-

trate more on enabling legislation than on mandatory orders. It would create the possibility of things happening, as when the British Government made money available for cooperative development, it unleashed the creation of a very large number of worker-owned and small-scale enterprises. The concept of appropriate technology can fit into all types of economic and political structure — except where the rich are so rapacious that they will allow the rural poor to keep nothing. Then there is no possibility of people's helping themselves.

**?** Q.: Are you satisfied with the progress made in spreading appropriate technology at the user level? Has it made any real impact on the grass roots, or is it not just a case of a few small-scale pilot projects in a few countries?

**!** A.: I don't think any of us is satisfied. The movement has demonstrated that there are technologies that will help. The NGOs' main effort has been in developing the technology: they have proved what could be done on a wider scale. But the spreading of that technology on a wide scale goes far beyond their resources. A new wave of efforts is needed to take what has been proved and to disseminate it more widely.

**?** Q.: It seems to me that AT is spreading fairly well in the case of goods that are provided publicly, such as water supply or health care. But it doesn't seem to have got very far in the case of private goods, either in consumer products and domestic tools bought for the individual family, or in the case of small-scale equipment and machinery for small farmers and manufacturers. Isn't there a real problem with the diffusion of AT in private goods?

**!** A.: I would accept that. Adopting new technology is a very difficult thing. We need to know a lot more what makes people adopt some things and reject others. People usually have pretty good

reasons for taking on or not taking on a new technology. For example we were once helping to install plastic village water catchment tanks in Swaziland, but we found that the villagers didn't want them. They wanted individual tanks, because there was no institution in the community that could exercise control over a village tank.

We are not dealing with standardized, mass-produced products. Every circumstance is different, and you have to build a technological package that will suit local circumstances. We need to find ways of reaching into villages and getting people's confidence.

**?** Q.: Do you think that so far there has perhaps been too much emphasis on inventing new machinery and not enough on making sure appropriate technology is widely used? Haven't we got enough inventions now, and shouldn't the new priority be getting them widely diffused? Isn't there perhaps a case for specialized agencies dealing with the application and diffusion of appropriate technology?

**!** A.: I think so. But if you're going into diffusion, you first have to have something to diffuse. You have to have the technologies before you can spread them. We have a lot of hardware now, it's been tested out. But the diffusion of it is a different order of activity. Maybe we do need separate organizations concerned entirely with diffusion. But I haven't got a blueprint to offer of what the correct structure would be. At one level you would need to discuss with governments how to facilitate appropriate technology; at another, local NGOs have an important role to play.

**?** Q.: What about a social marketing approach — using advertising, brand images, salesmen to push AT products, but on a nonprofit basis?

**!** A.: I've no doubt that the market has an important role to play in the diffusion of appropriate technologies. But how AT products should be marketed, other than by



their manufacturers, is a difficult question. We come back to changing the rules and government support for the small-scale sector. But I am quite certain that such bodies as ITDG should not try to combine commercial marketing of AT products with their essential function of providing impartial information, evaluation and advice on appropriate technology

**?** Q.: For all the talk of participation, isn't there still an element of missionary activity about appropriate technology-outsiders deciding what sort of thing is best and persuading people to adopt it? Isn't it conceivable that, provided governments created the proper

*Appropriate technology groups have proved that it is possible to make things small and cheap but efficient*



economic framework of rules, and a broad-based training and vocational education system, that most people would invent and adopt appropriate technology on their own?

**!** A.: The task of external appropriate technology organizations is to make available technology choices and to help people to introduce the ones that suit them best. I'm quite sure it would be possible for a government to construct rules so that it would become virtually impossible to use anything but appropriate technology, and that would be ideal. In the absence of that, the AT movement exists to offer choices: people must be free to choose, and the choose what suits them best.

There are certain technologies that have taken off by themselves, because they fit so well that local people will use them without any help from anyone — look at the bicycle for example. But other items do need help. There's nothing in the nature of the market that will enable the right technology to spread. It's not as if the market is neutral, working on pure Adam Smith principles. In most countries the market is strongly distorted against small-scale and local technologies and products.

There are certain areas where AT is flourishing of its own accord; one is in Northern India. No one really understands why. But it is a very prosperous agricultural area where innovation is in the air. And culture comes into to it too: northern Indians have 3 000 years of technical dexterity behind them. In other countries and even in other parts of India AT might need a lot more encouragement.

**?** Q.: There are some exceptional cases where appropriate technologies are spreading rapidly on a really significant scale. I'm thinking of cases like the mini-sugar mills that now produce one-fifth of India's sugar. What distinguishes these large-scale successes from the rest? What can we learn from them?



A Western style of agriculture is not sustainable, and the environment can't stand it

**I** A.: The mini-sugar mills worked because the innovations that made them possible were not worked out in a lab, in isolation, but were taken out to the actual practitioners, the small mill owners. They were told: try this out. If it fails, we'll pay you. If it succeeds, you'll keep the profit as a reward. The second thing was to ensure there was a capital goods industry to supply the users, backed up with research and development making continuous small improvements to keep the technology competitive. Another big factor was that government policy in India favoured the development of small-scale units.

**?** Q.: Turning now to agriculture, are you satisfied with the progress of appropriate technology there?

**I** A.: No. There's not enough small farm equipment on the ground. A lot more work is needed on identifying farmers' needs and priorities, and on developing equipment that can be made locally.

**?** Q.: Schumacher was very interested in organic agriculture, yet ITDG doesn't seem to do much in this field.

**I** A.: We've tended to leave that to more specialized organizations. I suppose that's because we concentrate on hardware, and organic farming has not got a separate and special hardware of its own. Even so we are particularly interested in biological husbandry methods, and we are trying to set up a subcommittee on this.

Quite a long time ago Schumacher and I did a little study on what would happen if total world agricultural production and food pro-

cessing were based on European and American levels of energy use. It turned out that all known oil reserves would disappear off the face of the earth in thirty years. So far the West has thought in terms of substituting energy and chemicals for people, even though the highest productivity per ha usually comes from small farms where a lot of labour is used. The West has a totally unsustainable form of agriculture, where the amount of fertilizer used has to be continually increased simply to keep production at its present levels.

People have tended to think that the only function of agriculture is to produce cheap food. But it has a lot of secondary functions: to make sure soil remains in good condition, to keep the water table pure, to maintain genetic variety, to ensure the quality of food. We in the West have thought in terms of a battle with nature, but as Schumacher said, if we win that battle, we'll be on the losing side.

If we hook farmers in developing countries into a Western style of agriculture, then they are doomed, because it is not sustainable and the environment can't stand it. What we really need to do is to develop an approach to agriculture that minimizes external inputs into farming, and really develop the biology of farming, instead of just throwing chemicals into the soil without any real understanding of what that is doing to soil structure.

The present, when there is an agricultural surplus in Western countries, is an ideal time to experiment with farming systems that may initially be less productive, but will be sustainable. They will lower costs, too — organic farmers I know spend only \$25 per ha or so on fertilizers, instead of \$250 per ha for conventional farming. At the moment Western farmers' incomes are caught in a cleft stick between rapidly rising costs and lowered prices due to overproduction. Instead of thinking of how to increase production,

it would make economic sense now to concentrate on ways of lowering costs.

**?** Q.: Looking to the future now, do you see further progress for appropriate technology? Or is inappropriate technology moving ahead so fast that it can't be caught up with? And has recession changed the outlook for the idea?

**I** A.: I would never have helped to start the Intermediate Technology Development Group if I hadn't been an optimist. But I don't think it's just a matter of optimism now. It's a matter of facts. The present depression is not just an awful aberration from the boom years of the 1960s. I think we have now passed the era of limitless growth. Cheap energy and cheap food will prove to have been short-lived phenomena. In the West we are going to have to change our economies, to aim at more decentralization, more local self-reliance, if we are not to see the disintegration of our societies. As far as the developing countries are concerned, it's clear now that conventional aid based on conventional technologies hasn't worked. The developing countries are groaning under debts that can't be repaid. Unemployment is growing, rural areas are declining or stagnating. That is the net effect of conventional aid. How could anyone suggest that all we need is more of it? We need to change the quality of aid, and it may turn out less expensive than in the past. Appropriate technology must become an integral part of development, not just an interesting adjunct, as it is at present. It's the only ray of hope for the rural poor. Nothing else that's being discussed will make a half penny worth of difference.

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# RETHINKING AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT:

by Armelle Braun

The Algerian state is well off. It is assured a comfortable income from exports of petroleum and natural gas. SONATRACH, the Algerian National Society of Hydrocarbons, is known throughout the world, as is the skill of Algerian negotiators.

The country has managed its industrialization at a brisk pace and has become rich. Its citizens' incomes, especially in the cities, have increased and with them the demand for food products. The new wealth of the urban population does not alone explain the increase in demand. Population, too, is growing rapidly, about 3.25 percent a year. The total population, 11.8 million in 1966, reached 14.7 million in 1973 and 20 million in 1981.

Wealth and fertility could be great advantages if agricultural resources followed. Now for more than a decade, the annual growth of food production has not exceeded one percent. By comparison with the index of 100 established for the period 1969-71, agricultural production per inhabitant was 97 in 1972, 88 in 1974, 92 in 1976, 73 in 1977, climbing back to 87 and 84 respectively for the years 1980 and 1981.(1)

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To make up for a growing food deficit, the Government turned to massive importation of foodstuffs, including such staples as cereals, sugar, milk products, meat, eggs and potatoes. The imports have grown at a rate of 20 percent annually in recent years; at present national production covers only about 30 percent of consumption.

Even if Algeria has never spent more than the equivalent of two months' petro-gas receipts on importing food, the Government believes that the tendency is dangerous and should be reversed. The press echoes this concern. *El Moudjahid*, the Algerian daily newspaper, stated in a recent article that "to satisfy food needs is becoming the credo of the country's economy" and that "dependence for food on developed capitalist countries . . . risks compromising economic and social liberation if one counts on the manna of oil and gas."

The difficulties of Algerian agriculture have remote origins, and to understand them it would be necessary to examine the stages of colonization since 1830. We shall be content in this article to evoke some of the more immediate constraints that contribute to the stagnation of the sector and to set forth briefly the principal measures taken by

## ALGERIA'S ADJUSTMENT PROCESS



The distribution of areas occupied by different crops has not varied much since the end of the colonial period

the first five-year plan, 1980-84, with a view to increasing the annual growth rate of agricultural production to four percent.

We will begin with a sketch of the development of production and yields of the last 10 or 12 years.

The statistical services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Revolution (MARA) (2) have established that between 1967 and 1978 production:

- fell for wine, dates, citrus, summer grains;

- remained the same for winter cereals and sugar;

- increased for milk, red meats, eating eggs, market garden, legumes, olive oil, but this growth did not match the rise in internal demand;

- rose for fruits with stones and pips (except citrus) and table grapes at a rate equal to the growth of demand;

- rose for potatoes, whose production appreciably surpassed the rate of demographic growth;

- rose sharply for forage crops.

Whichever juridical sector one considers (self-managed, Agrarian Revolution or private), this agriculture is dominated by a low-intensity cultivation system, with very mediocre grain yields, particularly in the private sector. The percentage of lands occupied is:

- self-managed sector: 71.9 percent of 205 000 ha of usable arable land (UAL);

- Agrarian Revolution sector: 87.8 percent of 799 999 ha of UAL;

- private sector: 86.4 percent of 4.732 million ha of UAL.

Table 1 shows the development of lands occupied by type of crops. Between 1955-59 and 1965-69 distribution of crops remained the same, but there was

a drop in cultivated lands due to the increase in fallow and a slight diminution of total lands used for agriculture. This phenomenon was accompanied by a near-general drop in mean yields, with the exception of sugar beet, which made good progress (this crop has been under irrigation since 1964-65). These tendencies held during the first four-year plan (1970-73) and the second four-year plan (1974-77). Grains continued to predominate even if they show a slight drop in area between 1974 and 1977; area of lands in fallow rose. Between 1955-59 and 1974-77 the forages more than tripled their area at the expense of barley and vineyards. The uprooting of vineyards (54 000 ha in 1968-69) has essentially benefited forages and fruits. The only other crops whose area increased in the period 1974-77 relative to 1955-59 are market garden, beetroot and fruit trees.

We must conclude that the distribution of areas occupied by different crops has not varied much since the end of the colonial period, since grains and fallow continue to occupy 84.8 percent of arable land, and in 1979 40 percent of usable land was fallow.

All the juridical agricultural sectors have recorded increases in production, but production in the private sector has grown more rapidly in a more significant number of crops, in particular in those where the rise of prices has been most important, that is fruits and vegetables.

The only rises in yields recorded by the self-managed sector, which uses, however, huge quantities of fertilizer, are those of grain crops; the annual average passed from 8.2 quintals per ha to 8.3 q/ha, higher rates than those obtained by the private sector, whose yields in grains in recent years have reached a ceiling of between 5.4 and 5.1 q/ha. The grain yields of the Agrarian Revolution sector fall between those of the other two sectors, but they are nearer those of the private sector. The average yields of other crops are proving lower for the post part than the yields obtained by the other two sectors.

The private sector shows rises in yields

only for market garden produce and citrus. Market garden crops are the only case in this sector in which a simultaneous increase has been achieved in both area cultivated and productivity.

Let us note, however, that despite the poverty of their cereal yields, private holdings produce 60 percent of the grains produced in the country, as well as 60 percent of the vegetables, 90 percent of the meat and 85 percent of the fresh milk. In 1976 this sector held 92 percent of the sheep, 91 percent of the cattle and all the goats.

Since yields of most crops are staying the same or even falling, those increases in production that there have been are essentially the result of an increase in the amount of land utilized. Such a situation is surprising, especially when "Algerian agriculture . . . profits by the intense interest of the political direction of the country." (3)

Why does this state of affairs exist? The Central Committee of the National Liberation Front (FLN) maintains that constraints of every kind, juridical, administrative, financial, technical and economic, daily, cyclical and persistent, aggravated and made more and more complex by a close environment or one extended upward and downward by the processes of production and commercialization that affect and characterize the agricultural sector . . . engender inconsistencies and inadequacies at all stages of the activity." These constraints would be due to "the imperfection of the sector's organization and . . . to the unjustified proliferation of these organisms (protection and support) whose management has sometimes proved uncontrollable." (4)

Aside from questions of management, one of the most important problems is financial. Despite official declarations, it is certain that agriculture has not been favoured with the priority that the national development strategy ought to have given it. For ten years it has been like a poor relative. The two four-year plans and even the 1980-84 plan, although they show a large effort in absolute figures, have allocated to agriculture only very inadequate investment



credits. The part reserved to the sector reached a ceiling around 12-13 percent, and it is only 11.8 percent of the present plan.

Neither the farm holdings nor the national enterprises charged with putting into effect the works of agricultural infrastructure are succeeding, however, in utilizing entirely the funds allocated to them; the rate of utilization of investment credits has wavered since 1967 between 67 and 69 percent, with notable progress in 1978 when 80 percent of the credits were utilized.

Also, the authors of the Plan affirm that "the utilization of agricultural investment has not, for a long time, assured the simple renewal of productive capital so that agricultural production, outside of some speculation, stagnates or even tends to fall."(5)

Agriculture, moreover, suffers badly from competition with the industrial sector, which has always absorbed the great majority of investments, taken its lands – and often the most productive and best equipped – deflected its water resources to industrial enterprises and taken its managers and workers, often the youngest and best trained.

We come to the "imperfection of the organization of the sector." Agriculture functions badly, so badly that many see there the essential reason for the sector's stagnation; its dysfunctions are such as to cancel most of the efforts made in other respects to improve the mechanism of production on which the yields depend.

It will be a question here essentially of constraints on the agricultural sector, including the self-managed and

Agrarian Revolution sectors. (6) The state sector occupies 40.7 percent of the total UAL of the country. Composed of farms that belonged to the Europeans, the self-managed sector, which legally came into existence in March 1963, occupies, with cooperatives of old *moudjahidine*, (7) the best lands in the country (2.050 million ha) and disposes of equipment beyond comparison with those with which the private agricultural sector, which covers about 7.5 million ha, has been endowed. In 1980 there were 1 700 self-managed holdings of an average of 1 112 ha. The lands of the National Agrarian Revolution Fund, established in 1971, are of lower quality. They extended on 31 March 1980 over 1 463 499 ha. The Agricultural Production Cooperatives of Agrarian Revolution (CAPRA) and the Polyvalent Communal Agricultural Servicing Cooperatives (CAPCS), which

Table 1  
Development of use of lands and yields, 1955-59 / 1974-77 ('000 ha)

	Areas				Areas				Areas				Areas			
	Aver- ages 55-59	Struc- tures p.c.	Index	Yields	Aver- ages 65-69	Struc- tures p.c.	Index	Yields	Aver- ages 70-73	Struc- tures p.c.	Index	Yields	Aver- ages 74-77	Struc- tures p.c.	Index	Yields
Cereals	3 370	47	100	—	2 747	39.7	81	—	3 255	46.4	97	—	3 064	42.8	91	—
hard wheat	1 501	21	100	6.6	1 481	21.4	99	5.6	1 530	21.8	102	5.4	1 439	20.1	96	5.94
soft wheat	480	6.7	100	8.5	574	8.3	120	6.3	783	11.2	163	7.2	717	10.1	149	6.38
barley	1 366	19.1	100	6.0	643	9.3	47	5.7	828	11.8	61	5.9	805	11.2	59	6.96
Legumes	100	1.4	100	5.1	75	1.1	75	5.0	86	1.2	86	4.9	96	1.3	96	6.91
Fallow	2 832	39.6	100	—	3 380	48.8	119	—	2 790	39.8	98	—	3 005	42.0	106	—
Artificial forages	81	1.1	100	27.3	70	1.0	86	22.0	143	2.0	176	23.0	263	3.7	325	23.67
Natural grassland	32	0.5	100	—	34	0.5	106	—	33	0.5	103	—	25	0.3	78	—
Market garden	85	1.2	100	100.0	92	1.3	108	68.9	110	1.5	129	67.4	157	2.2	185	36.81
Tobacco	21	0.3	100	6.8	8	0.1	38	7.0	5	—	24	7.0	3	—	14	9.50
Cotton	6	—	100	8.0	4	—	57	5.6	2	—	29	7.0	0.8	—	13	8.93
Beetroots	2	—	100	83.8	3	—	150	196.0	3	—	150	153.1	3.0	—	150	196.16
Oilseeds (sunflower)	3	—	100	4.0	6	—	200	1.2	5	—	167	5.1	3.3	—	110	2.69
Vines	379	5.3	100	42.1	315	4.5	83	25.3	274	3.9	72	27.0	234	3.3	62	16.61
Citrus	90	0.4	100	120.5	44	0.6	47	98.0	46	0.6	53	111.8	50	0.7	56	102.55
Olives (oil, hl/ha)	120	1.7	100	1.8	93	1.3	77	1.9	130	1.8	108	1.5	173	2.4	144	3.81
Figs	66	0.9	100	15.5	33	0.5	50	12.7	34	0.5	52	19.2	38	0.5	53	21.48
Various fruits	30	0.4	100	40.0	14	0.2	47	56.9	31	0.4	103	28.5	77	1.1	257	14.48
Date palms	?	—	—	—	44	0.6	—	33.0	64	0.9	—	20.5	73	1.0	—	20.70
Total	7 157	100.0	100	—	6 962	100.0	97	—	7 011	100.0	98	—	7 162	100.0	100	—

Yields: q/ha (average yields for the period in question) Index: 1955-59 = 100.

Source: Tableaux de l'Economie Algérienne 1960. Statistique Agricole, Série A et B. S.Bedrani, L'agriculture algérienne depuis 1966: Etatisation ou privatisation (Office des publications universitaires, Algiers, 1981).



The provisions of 1974 gave the holdings a little more autonomy and the workers a guaranteed minimum income

assist them, benefit from an equipment rather similar to that of the self-managed sector.

The origin of certain organizational problems of the self-managed domains goes back to their establishment, right after independence. Since that time Algeria has faced a serious shortage of trained personnel. The Government, in order to staff an agriculture that it wanted to control and "socialize," created at the same time as the self-managed domain, in 1963, a National Agrarian Revolution Board (ONRA), one function of which was to be "to organize the management of holdings abandoned by their owners." ONRA established a series of bodies to control all phases of agricultural activity, from inputs to credit to marketing. As bureaucracies will, ONRA wields its guardianship like a bulldozer, undermining the competence of the numerous bodies it set up itself. The costs of managing the holdings became more burdensome while the holdings themselves lost all freedom of decision. In 1968-69 came reforms in the direction of decentralization. ONRA was liquidated. Some services of MARA took over, and some *willaya*-level structures for coordination were established. It is not clear that the self-managed domain thereby got its independence; before the reform it was subject to interference by a multitude of offices which, though theoretically there for the purpose of serving it, in fact suffocated it, as much by their incompetence as by the sheer numbers of bureaucratic procedures. Thus from 1969 to 1973 and even after a new reform in 1974, the self-managed domains and the CAPRAs were caught in the net of what the administration calls the "surrounding structures."

National or cooperative service boards were charged, according to production unit, with providing fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, agricultural equipment and livestock feeds and, further along, with marketing production by product. These boards, which had a monopoly in inputs and/or marketing also have the monopolies in the import and export (when there is any) of the particular product. They are for the agricultural world what national societies are for the industrial. Each domain has its "cooperative" for accounting. Each of the inputs and marketing boards has its administrative council where most of the functionaries representing the different public administrations are based; the producers, designated by MARA, are always in the minority. The National Bank of Algeria distributes rural credit to each holding conforming to the established cultivation plan. MARA

imposes standard agricultural practices, often ill-considered, whose essential aim is to keep down labour costs. Prices are fixed by decree on a basis of production, and the holdings of the state sector are obliged to supply themselves at offices whose prices are also fixed by the ministry.

The provisions of 1974 gave the holdings a breath of fresh air. They obtained a little more autonomy in matters of financing and inputs and the workers a guaranteed minimum income, which has a certain importance when one works on holdings that are running a deficit. This modicum of freedom, stingily granted, is not however sufficient to mobilize the interest of the workers' collectives and incite them to organize themselves better to do more productive work. It has only a small impact on the profound ills of the system over





ose mechanisms producers have no control.

everything happens as if the pieces of a puzzle had not found players able to put them together, or as if each group of players had a different idea of the picture to be reconstructed. In these conditions, the upstream-downstream relationship between bureaucratic structures and farm holdings is left open to all sorts of incoherencies that run counter to the officially adopted model of agricultural technology.

Let us take the mechanization sector; the ONAMA sets standards — and one way these standards are expressed is by rises in precise credits for payment of labour. These are, however, rarely respected, for at all stages of the process (distribution of equipment, supply of replacement parts, service after sale and repairs, esta-

blishment of a warehouse for equipment to rent) something happened that stopped progress. Resentment was harboured over the years against the National Board of Agricultural Equipment (ONAMA), which was responsible for these different operations, for having repairs made only very slowly and at a higher price than private enterprise would have to pay. The consequences are particularly serious for the holdings whose machines have an elevated rate of breakdowns for reasons of age or faulty maintenance. The lack of equipment in good repair delayed field work or even caused it to be abandoned.

The problem of spare parts is complicated by the fact that machines are imported from a number of different

*Oil receipts  
help pay the bill for  
cereal imports*

countries. The pieces necessary for repairs are therefore not standard and the workshops wind up lost in an odd assortment. But even parts of the Cirta tractor, which is made in Constantine, are often unavailable.

The same incoherence is found in the application of a "package of technology" (of which the machines are one element). The various production factors — or intermediate accomplishments — necessary to obtain correct technical combinations are rarely available at the right moment; seeds may be delivered late, plant care is poor or non-existent, soil is poorly prepared or weeding neglected, and fertilizers are spread too late and feed the wrong plants. The productivity of labour and the yields can only suffer from such a lack of coordination. Where crop rotations have been badly prepared white grubs attack the plants, and, for cereals, 30 percent is an average loss. (8)

Delays in delivery can be explained partly by inadequate transportation. There are not enough trucks and these suffer damage and breakdowns for the very reasons that we have just given. One solution would be to stock fertilizer, seeds and chemical products where they are actually used rather than depending on their arriving at the last minute. But there, too, equipment is wanting. Stocks of market garden seeds needed in the western part of the country were, in 1978, 35 000 tons, when the existing storage capacities amounted to only 6 000 tons. Among stored foodstuffs, notably cereals, there is an average loss of 20 percent. (9)

We come to the next structures after production unit. One of the most discredited has been OFLA, the Algerian Board of Fruits and Vegetables. It was responsible for marketing the entire output of fruits and vegetables of the state sector, but was reproached for in fact marketing only a part of it. It was also reproached for causing the loss of the harvests, because OFLA alone could initiate harvesting, and very often the fruits were gathered too late. It was reproached, too, for buying the production at prices lower than the ceiling prices fixed by the State since 1969





Three hundred thousand ha are irrigated already; the objective is another 600 000 by the year 2000

with regard to quality standards and seasonality and for reselling it on the markets at the highest prices. The defense is that this practice would have permitted balancing the budget and equipping its services at the expense of farm income, which is often deficit. Such practices only serve to disorganize producers and discourage production. Worse still, the profit margins of this board, which held a monopoly of imports of fruits and vegetables, were established in such a way that OFLA, whose job was to regulate the national market, had hardly any economic incentive for supplying itself on the national market, since it achieves a margin of 40 percent on imported tonnages above that on local deliveries. This is what permitted it show a more favourable balance sheet at the end of the accounting period.

To the inefficiency of the surrounding infrastructure one must add the irrationality of the land division among the production units, as much in the self-managed sector as in the Agrarian Revolution sector. Contrary to what one is inclined to think, it is rare that a domain should be occupied by a single tenant; there was an extraordinary tangle of land structures. In the western part of the Litidja plain, for example, a zone of about 3 000 ha was divided among 12 holdings, self-managed, Agrarian Revolution and private. A domain had parcels several km apart; one or several parcels of a domain could be contained within the lands of another, and some parcels belonging to the cooperatives could be within the territory of a self-managed domain, and likewise lands belonging to private owners.

This paradoxical situation is explained

by the circumstances in which the domains were established after independence. It was necessary to even things out as quickly as possible; the ex-owners had taken care to destroy all the surveys, maps and documents concerning their holdings, and the Algerian Government had neither the time nor the means to form groups of specialists who could have calmly redistributed the land according to principles of economic and human rationality, assuming that they were in agreement.

It is evident that the heterogeneity of the land base could only complicate the management of production units and be a cause of delays and additional expenses at all stages of the process.

At the end of the second four-year plan, those responsible for the Algerian economy, ill at ease in the face of discontent in the rural areas and the ill humour of the urban consumer and dismayed by the high expenditures for imported food products, gave themselves a year of reflection – 1979. The result of this exercise in self-criticism, the first five-year plan (1980-84), is generally regarded as a “putting back in order” to correct the “deviationism” of the production mechanism. It foresees, in effect, a whole series of measures and options which, on certain points, notably distribution, is equivalent to a reorientation of the food strategy.

The most spectacular measure is the liberalization of the marketing of fruits and vegetables produced by the state sector. The self-managed domains from now on will be able to choose between OFLA and the private agents to sell their harvest. OFLA still keeps the monopoly of import and export of agricultural products (except cereals marketed for all the juridical sectors of agriculture by OAIC). The prices are no longer fixed by the administration or boards: henceforth there will be competition between the private commercial sector and the state sector. This measure should raise the incomes of the production units and thus those of the producers. It is not certain that it does the consumer any good. But if this measure stimulates production, the market will be better stocked, and the abundance

should be a lowering factor. The State always has the option of importing in order to lower prices, but this is exactly what the new food policy seeks to avoid. The bets are thus open on the consequences of this decision on price formation; but let us not forget that so far all the food policies of the Government have been formulated against a background of poverty and that an abundance would change the givens of the problem. It is certain that if, in the case of fruits and vegetables, demand exceeds supply, which is still the case for consumers of fruits and vegetables will be, no doubt, the best-off of the urban classes.

Restructuring the self-managed domain and, to a lesser extent, the cooperative of the agrarian revolution is still one of the great decisions taken by the plan. This restructuring has been under way since 1980. The self-managed domains have proved by use that they were much too huge for the available management capacities and that their fragmentation did not simplify the task. The restructuring measure therefore aims at cutting the units up again into “economically viable and humanly masterable” units – so read the text – in order to form 4 500 to 5 000 holdings with one tenant each, endowed with agricultural buildings and necessary equipment. Each restructured domain, of which there are 1 500 at present, is provided with an agronomic engineer and an accountant paid by the State.

A series of social and economic measures was taken for the purpose of revaluing the incomes of farmers of all the juridical sectors so as to reduce the gap between agricultural and nonagricultural incomes. These are:

- bringing the guaranteed minimum agricultural wage up to the level of the national guaranteed minimum wage. The minimum threshold of the lowest wages is fixed at 1 000 dinars a month.<sup>(11)</sup> These measures have been effective since 1980;
- development of “social transfers” of the State; revaluing of the old-age pension and increase of family allocations;
- increase of the price of strategic agricultural products, while those of the



puts will be kept low; farmers, especially those of poor regions, will benefit from distribution of supplementary revenues starting with shares of collective equipment, subventions for marginal productions, investments in development and even, in certain areas of extreme poverty, consumer subsidy; development of supplementary activities in rural areas in order to get rid of agricultural underemployment; priority of employment given to children of old workers of the self-management who generally work seasonally in the self-managed domains; in credit, the interest rates will be low for long-term investments. An agricultural rural development bank has been created, and credit committees formed at the *willaya* level were intended to facilitate access to credit for the holdings.

As to the number of technical actions foreseen for making productivity grow, let us mention strongly increased use of production factors. The seeds chosen will be used more than will the seeds produced by the holdings. The use of fertilizers will be multiplied by 2.6 between 1979 and 1984, that of pesticides by 1.96. Animal husbandry will use 1.7 million tons of concentrated feeds (1.2 million tons in 1979). Veterinary treatments will tend to spread to all kinds of livestock.

A large effort is under way in water development for agriculture. The plan pledges nine billion dinars in order to complete nine dams now under construction and launch ten or more projects. The high plateaux and the semi-arid zones have priority in small and medium-sized water development projects.

Three hundred thousand ha of agricultural lands are already irrigated in Algeria. The objective for the year 2000 is to irrigate an additional 600 000 ha. In the course of the five-year plan, hydro-agricultural development will benefit by 5.7 billion dinars which will serve to irrigate 20 000 ha per year. But since the beginning of the plan, the projects actually put into effect in this domain have less than the foreseen ob-

jectives and so far only 14 000 - 15 000 ha per year have been irrigated. Fifty thousand motor-pump units a year will be distributed equally on credit (local annual production is 15 000 units).

In order to increase the absorption capacity of the sector, important technical means have been put into practice. The 31 *willayate* have now been given agricultural cooperatives for special rural management services (CASSAR), some of which are already operational. Furthermore, a dozen boards of rural management will be created to manage irrigated areas.

Finally, the plan includes a very special effort in rural habitation. The national programme of construction foresees the building of 200 000 lodgings for workers of the self-managed and Agrarian Revolution sectors. But from now to the end of 1983, a special national programme has been proposed to construct 80 000 prefabricated lodgings. The construction of villages of the Agrarian Revolution follows, but according to a new conception; these are "village supports" situated near the production unit and which furnish all essential services (teaching, health, post, mosque, etc.).

In the private sector, abandoned since the end of the 1960s, the dispositions taken by the ministers of agriculture and urbanism favour the "autoconstruction" of lodgings grouped or scattered in granting to the small private peasants for a small sum full ownership of plots of land (from 800 m<sup>2</sup> to 2 000 m<sup>2</sup>) for constructing a lodging and managing a family garden. The state supplies 56 000 dinars to each builder and takes responsibility for conditions and, should the occasion arise, collective equipment.

The private sector seems to be making its official reentry into the national economy. Despite its dimensions and its participation in production, it has been very marginalized for ten years, especially since the Agrarian Revolution. While in 1978 it occupied 73.7 percent of the lands used for agriculture, the medium- and long-term credits it used that year represented only 12.2 percent of those absorbed by the state

agricultural sector (self-managed and Agrarian Revolution). The percentage rose to 20.7 in 1980. The present plan foresees that the sector will benefit from credits of all kinds in order to favour its modernization. It has been mechanized very little overall, and the holdings still depend heavily on animal traction and the plough to do their tilling.

Finally, as regards select training, recruitment for agriculture will be more than doubled between 1979 and 1984. If the objectives of the plan are achieved, there will be one technical cadre (engineer or technician) for every 80 farmers.

(1) *FAO Production Annual, 1981.*

(2) *Evolution de l'agriculture de 1967 à 1978, Rapport général, vol. 1, Direction des études et de la planification (Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Revolution, Algiers, Sept. 1979).*

(3) *Central committee of the FLN, 3rd session, Résolution sur l'agriculture, published by El Moudjahid, 12 May 1980, Algiers.*

(4) *Idem.*

(5) *Evolution de l'agriculture de 1967 à 1978.*

(6) *For the agrarian revolution, see Ceres, No. 40, July-Aug. 1974, "The agrarian revolution," by Ait Amara, and No. 68, Mar.-Apr. 1979, "How real was Algeria's agrarian revolution?" by Guillermo Almeyra.*

(7) *Veterans of the national liberation army.*

(8) *Figure supplied by the Director of the General Direction of the Protection of Plants in an interview, Algiers, Oct. 1982.*

(9) *Idem.*

(10) *One dinar is equal to one French franc or about US\$0.15.*

#### *Further reading:*

*Bedrani, S., M. Bourenane and J.*

*Molina, Les politiques agraires en Algérie, Vers l'autonomie ou la dépendance. Centre de recherches en économie appliquée (CREA), Algiers.*

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# Books



**To combat hunger  
food availability is not  
enough**

*Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation, by Amartya Sen, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981, 258 p., 8.95 pounds sterling.*

About two-thirds of the world's population is involved in the starvation problem, whose main causes are economic and social, although many policy makers and researchers, for ideological reasons, do not recognize this. Famines are often attributed to natural disasters and are regarded as incidental and unforeseeable, but never structural phenomena. In fact, the reduction in food supply to the world and particularly to developing countries is affected by ecological imbalance, aggravation, advancement of soil erosion, climatic effects of forest disruption, exhaustion of yield possibility in areas not yet under crops, which should, theoretically, be controlled by men. We have also to take into account the consequences of some governmental decisions which - by allowing private farmers too free a hand - face hard obstacles to innovation and restructuring in agricultural production. For the same reason, either very dramatic conditions - as in the case of famines - or inadequate and constant failure in food supply for meeting people's

needs can be found in many developing countries.

We can say that the scientific and international debate about hunger is still characterized by the trade-off between neo-Malthusians and anti-Malthusians. According to the former, the only way to hold back starvation and to avoid its generalized spread in the world as a whole is that of stopping drastically the demographic push in developing nations. Malthus's theories still have an audience, though their main forecast has been belied. The basic mistake in Malthus's approach is that population increase is looked upon as an independent variable that can be isolated from other social phenomena. But it really depends on political and economic factors.

Anti-Malthusians, however, consider famine to be the most important cause of overpopulation, by the following reasoning: the richer countries, which have better health, higher intake of proteins and more varied feeding, have the lowest birth rate, while birth rates are higher in those countries where lower rates of protein consumption are recorded. According to this view, the hunger problem could be solved by removing such diseases as malaria and by improving feeding. Healthier and better nourished

people should be able to do more work. In this way, food supply could be increased by developing irrigation and new agricultural techniques. Finally the anti-Malthusians' proposal is aimed at better utilizing the natural environment and population.

**The entitlement approach.** Compared with these old and schematic patterns, Sen's book is remarkable since it allows studies and researches on famines to take an important step forward. He describes the concepts of poverty, starvation and famines and explains their structural linkages. Some historical case studies of famines in Great Bengal, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and the Sahel follow. Analysis is conducted according to selected and very significant parameters, and the reader can benefit from facts and notes unknown till now. Particularly interesting is the functional relationship that the author identified in many cases between farmers' micro-economic behaviour and governmental macro-economic policies.

But one of the most salient aspects of Sen's work is his attempt to study the matter through the so-called entitlement approach, which views famines as economic disasters, not merely as food crises. That famines can take place without a substantial failure in food availability is of great interest mainly because of the position of the food availability approach in current starvation analysis. The entitlement approach concentrates instead "on the ability of different sections of the population to establish command over food, using the entitlement relation operating in that society depending on its legal, economic, political and social characteristics."



Sen's opinion, a person starves either because he does not have the ability to command enough food or because he does not use this ability to avoid starvation. The entitlement approach focuses on the former, ignoring the latter hypothesis. Moreover, it deals with those means of commanding food that are legitimized by the legal system working in that country. "Ownership of food is one of the most primitive property rights, and in each society there are rules governing this right. The entitlement approach concentrates on each person's entitlement to commodity bundles including food, and views starvation as resulting from failure to be entitled to a bundle with enough food." The political philosophy of Sen's work could be found in and summarized by this quotation.

Furthermore, the entitlement approach to famines leads to the following four considerations: (1) It offers a general pattern by which famines, rather than one particular hypothesis about their causation, can be analyzed. (2) It is possible to understand that famines can occur in overall boom conditions (as in Bengal in 1943) as well as in slump conditions (as in Ethiopia in 1974). We have to remember, in fact, that famines can develop with increased output in general and food in particular, when the command organization is against some particular social group. (3) The importance accorded to entitlement emphasizes the legal rights of people: the law stands between food availability and food entitlement. (4) Finally, it is important to distinguish between decline of food availability and that of direct entitlement to food. "The former is concerned with how much food there is in the economy in question, while the latter deals with each food-grower's

output of food which he is entitled to consume directly."

The originality of this volume is clear. The author does not limit himself to creating new instruments of economic analysis, but develops new and innovative techniques of quantitative analysis in the measurement of poverty, famine, mortality and entitlement. Thus he opens new paths for further research on basic human needs.

Giampaolo Busso



#### Against the mainstream of development economics

*Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion, by P.T. Bauer, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1981, 293 p.*

P.T. Bauer, professor of economics at the London School of Economics and a long-time critic of conventional wisdom on "development" presents a book that draws heavily on articles he published during the last ten years. It is on economic thought in general, but with particular emphasis on development economics and on "the West and the Third World."

The author takes up a number of the most essential problems in these fields: — the concern for "equality." He is convinced that the widespread emphasis on redistributive policies hinders the development of productivity within a society and thus produces a situation in which the poor might be more equal but worse off than in a society without such policies.

— the population explosion. Bauer points to the rapid population increase during the Industrial Revolution in

Europe and to the remaining huge reserves of unused resources in the Third World.

— foreign aid. He stresses that in almost all cases foreign aid has helped politically privileged groups to consolidate their power bases and to prevent a genuine development based on the increase of productivity on a large scale.

— the investment fetish. According to Bauer, historical experience shows that capital formation does not precede development but forms part of it. He attributes the unreasonable emphasis on investment in economic analysis as well as in politics to a general lack of historical understanding.

— the belief in statistics and mathematics in "modern" economics. A quotation from Keynes illustrates Bauer's position vis-à-vis mathematical economics: "Too large a proportion of recent 'mathematical' economics are mere concoctions, as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependencies of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols."

It is quite interesting that Bauer — like other adherents of economic liberalism — raises points of criticism of mainstream development economics that are quite similar to those of many Marxist-oriented studies. For both approaches, the role of the state in a mixed economy provides a main focus of criticism. And there seems even to be a structural similarity between very crude Marxist and Liberalist arguments: while the one tends to have an unshakable belief in the effectiveness and democratic character of central planning and a full political control of the economy, the other tends to have a metaphysical confidence in the operation of mar-





ket forces. Prof. Bauer believes that in an "open society" the market gives everybody what he deserves and gives optimum prospects for the society as a whole: "Economic differences are largely the result of people's capacities and motivations . . . A disproportionate number of the poor lack the capabilities and inclination for economic achievement, and often for cultural achievement as well . . . large-scale penalization of productive groups for the benefit of the materially and culturally less productive, and for the benefit of those who administer wealth transfers, impairs the prospects of a society." Every politicization of life, which — according to the author — always accompanies demands for redistribution, is seen primarily as an obstacle to the beneficial work of market forces. That this politicization might be in fact the consequence of the *hardship* caused by the working of market forces appears to be out of the grasp of liberal minds. Thus, no positive aspects are attributed to the development of the labour movement — the workers should have better aspired to realize "the opportunities seized by such men as Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Lord Northcliff . . ."

The reader wonders who would have produced the cars if everybody had become a little Henry Ford.

It is indeed deplorable that topics of such central concern to development theory and policy as those raised by P.T. Bauer are treated from the posture of a pretentious nonconformist, which in many ways lacks intellectual seriousness. The "inability to note obvious evidence" is a typical argument against people who hold the "wrong" positions. Bauer's critique of positions that hold colonialism and dependency responsible

for Third World underdevelopment is central to most of the book: "Altogether, it is anomalous or even perverse to suggest that external commercial relations are damaging to development or to the living standards of the people of the Third World. They act as channels for the flow of human and financial resources and for new ideas, methods and crops. They benefit people by providing a large and diverse source of imports and by opening up markets for exports."

Frequently, the argument of intellectual opponents are overdrawn in a way which makes them appear ridiculous. Hardly anybody would seriously suggest that all external contacts are damaging to a Third World country's social development without making some reservations and exceptions. Bauer treats arguments from very different theoretical backgrounds as though they formed part of one simple, profoundly mistaken intellectual context — like demands for a radical dissociation from the world market, for the stabilization of commodity prices, and for an increase in aid, which in fact *only* have in common a more or less strong emphasis on state intervention.

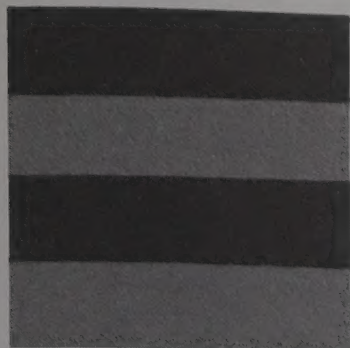
Bauer's basic indicator for "development" is life expectancy. Life expectancy in precolonial societies was low, and its general rise over the last decades is seen as a proof of the beneficial character of colonialism and contacts with the West, i.e., as the consequence of the dynamization of traditional societies, the development of infrastructure, the guarantee of law and order, etc. Though "life expectancy" might be in many respects a better indicator than GNP, there are nevertheless a number of problems with Bauer's anal-

ysis:

- (1) Like GNP, "life expectancy" is statistical average; low life expectancy might be the consequence of a high infant mortality and high death tolls of epidemic diseases, which are completely different from continuous malnutrition of more than half of a society.
- (2) When it is stated that "the attitudes, values and beliefs which keep many people poor are often integral part of their lives," one cannot at the same time refer to the destruction of these attitudes by colonialism as an unquestionable achievement.
- (3) For hardly any of the authors he criticizes does the precolonial era provide a relevant frame of reference for present development perspectives. On the other hand, many studies have shown that — at least in Latin America — the intensification of commercial contacts in the nineteenth century reinforced the plantation economy and oligarchical political structures and thus, inhibited successful Western-style development. Bauer refutes any idea of negative impacts of international contacts on the weaker partner without taking into account the whole body of literature, in which these problems have been extensively discussed, which is to say, dependency theory.

Wolfgang Hein





## Welfare economics

**Abdique Rahman Osmani**  
**Economic Inequality and Group Welfare—**  
**Welfare: A Theory of Comparison with**  
**Application to Bangladesh**  
 Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982, 180 p.,  
 10.00 pounds sterling.

Recent developments in the theories of real income, inequality and poverty have opened up new avenues for social welfare comparison. The present study explores some of the avenues in both theory and practice. The framework of analysis used is the so-called named goods approach, elaborated by Sen, in which the same commodity consumed by two different persons is treated as two named goods. Practical application of the welfare criteria so derived has been illustrated by comparing real income, inequality and poverty in Bangladesh between the years 1963-64 and 1973-74. According to the author, total poverty in Bangladesh seems to have been less severe in 1963-64 than in 1973-74. *Osmani* is a member of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies at Dhaka.

## Public enterprise

**Heroy P. Jones et al. (Eds.)**  
**Public Enterprise in Less-developed**  
**Countries**  
 Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,  
 1982, 350 p., 19.50 pounds sterling.

This volume consists of papers chosen from the Boston Area Public Enterprise Group Conference held in 1980. As is well known, public enterprises are government-owned firms that sell goods and services in a market. Involved in public production for private consumption, they are a hybrid of government and private enterprise. Thus, an analysis of public enterprise

requires insights from economics, management, political science and law. The essays collected in this volume address the following questions: Who should control public enterprises? How are decisions made in practice? How do public enterprises behave in international markets? How do public enterprises compare with other public policy tools for dealing with particular problems? The contributions combine theory and practice in analyzing a number of lessdeveloped countries. Among the contributors are Jones, Edward S. Mason and Raymond Vernon.

*Jones* is Associate Professor of Economics at Boston University, Massachusetts, USA.

## Technology

**Sanjaya Lall**  
**Developing Countries as Exporters of**  
**Technology: A First Look at the Indian**  
**Experience**  
 Macmillan, London, 1982, 134 p.,  
 15.00 pounds sterling.

Scattered evidence on various types of international sales of industrial technology suggests that the more industrialized of the developing countries have mastered modern technologies sufficiently to be able to compete with industrialized countries in several areas.

This book concentrates on the experience of India as an exporter of technology. Despite India's disappointing performance in terms of income growth and exports of manufactured products, she seems to be the leading Third World exporter of technology. The author provides a tentative explanation for this, arguing that official protection of local "learning," while fostering various inefficiencies, has enabled local enterprises to accumulate substantial stocks of technical know-how.

*Lall* is Senior Research Officer at the Institute of Economics and Statistics, University of Oxford.

## Country studies

**Samuel A. Morley**  
**Labor Markets and Inequitable Growth:**  
**The Case of Authoritarian Capitalism**  
**in Brazil**  
 Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,  
 1982, 316 p., 25 pounds sterling.

There is a consensus that most of the benefits of economic growth registered in Brazil in the last twenty years went to the rich, and precious few to the poor.

Professor Morley challenges this view. He shows that the poor benefited far more from growth than the income distribution statistics seem to imply. Despite appearances, the economy was highly dynamic for all groups.


Upward mobility for all Brazilians was massive, and the poor received much larger income gains than is commonly supposed. These gains are disguised by the way that distribution statistics are calculated. Despite these improvements, there is no doubt that the distribution of income became more unequal after 1960. But that was the result of skill-intensive growth in a labour surplus economy and was not the result of inequitable government policy.

*Morley* is Professor of Economics at Vanderbilt University, Tennessee, USA.

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## A test of good will

*There are practical reasons why national governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are committed to aid economic and social development should try to make their respective efforts more mutually reinforcing, especially where NGOs are working for the benefit of disadvantaged rural populations. The most obvious pressure in recent years has been the persistent economic crisis. Development budgets in poor countries, external assistance commitments by donor countries and public and private contributions to voluntary agencies have all been adversely affected. If limited resources can be applied more effectively toward the relief of poverty and the removal of its causes, surely this is sufficient reason to strive for closer cooperation between governmental and nongovernmental sectors.*

*Beyond this, however, the developmental activities of NGOs and those of governmental and intergovernmental agencies possess distinctive attributes capable of enhancing the development process. National and international bureaucracies might justly covet the greater speed, flexibility and innovativeness that many NGOs can employ in carrying out field projects. Perhaps even more attractive to many political leaders is the closer relationship NGOs can establish with target populations. For their part, NGOs may chafe at their lack of resources compared with those available to publicly funded development programmes.*

*Yet, on both sides, there remain reasons for wariness. The art of governing marginalized populations possessed of growing expectations is a tricky one at best. Where traditions and infrastructures of open, pluralistic societies are not strongly founded, the concept of autonomous voluntary associations designing their own development patterns can be disturbing to political leadership committed to some particular development model. The suspicion of undue foreign influence also arises, sometimes with justification, where indigenous NGOs become dependent upon material resources and technical guidance from counterpart groups in other countries. Voluntary groups, on the other hand, have often appeared to regard complete independence from government support as the hallmark of a successful programme. Their fear has been that the rapport they enjoy at the village level might be compromised for political purposes or enveloped within the anonymity of general development assistance.*

*As with most other development ills, no universal prescription is likely to eliminate all the barriers to closer cooperation between governments and NGOs active among their populations. As a start, however, principals on both sides might usefully reexamine, in order to determine its applicability to specific national situations, the six-paragraph section dealing with popular organizations that formed a part of the Programme of Action endorsed four years ago by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD).*

*At the time of the Conference only three nations expressed reservations concerning one paragraph of this section. This does not necessarily imply that all other governments represented were, and remain, prepared to "consider action to . . . remove all barriers to the free association of rural people in organizations of their choice . . ." and so forth. But the WCARRD declaration does provide a benchmark for measuring the seriousness of government intentions for encouraging popular organizations. Nongovernmental groups should use it wherever possible.*

## Whose news?

*For the sake of comparing the respective news values of mass media editors in the industrialized world with those of their counterparts in the Third World, the World Press Review, published by the nonprofit Stanley Foundation in New York, recently matched the "top ten" story selections for 1982 made by two worldwide news agencies against the nominations of half a dozen editors with more regional orientation. The comparison was instructive for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that of the total of 80 nominations only one – an eighth place mention of the Law of the Sea Convention – could be construed as having any direct connection with food or agriculture.*



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